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THE M'DONALDS;

OR,

THE ASHES OF SOUTHERN HOMES.

A TALE OF SHERMAN'S MARCH.

BY

WILLIAM HENRY PECK,

OF GEORGIA,

AUTHOR OF "BERTHA SEELY," "BEATRICE," "CHARLES MARION,"
"MARINA," "CONFEDERATE FLAG ON THE OCEAN," ETC., ETC.

"Tristius haud illis monstrum est nec sævior ulla
Pestis et ira Deûm, Stygiis sese extulit undis."

Æn. 3.

Dedicated to the American People.

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C O N T E N T S .



	Page
CHAPTER I.	
LYING IN WAIT,	5
CHAPTER II.	
THE ATTEMPT,	29
CHAPTER III.	
A NOBLE HEART UNDER A BLUE COAT,	45
CHAPTER IV.	
A TITLED "BUMMER,"	60
CHAPTER V.	
INSULTING THE FLAG,	74
CHAPTER VI.	
ATLANTA DEPOPULATED,	88
CHAPTER VII.	
THE COMING TEMPEST,	102
CHAPTER VIII.	
THE BARBAROUS DEED,	115

	Page
CHAPTER IX.	
"LIVING OFF THE COUNTRY,"	122
CHAPTER X.	
HUMAN HYENAS,	136
CHAPTER XI.	
HANGING FOR GOLD,	147
CHAPTER XII.	
ALWAYS WOUNDED,	161
CHAPTER XIII.	
CASHMORE ON THE TRACK,	168
CHAPTER XIV.	
THE LAST OF CASHMORE,	178
CHAPTER XV.	
CONCLUSION,	190

THE M'DONALDS ;

OR,

THE ASHES OF SOUTHERN HOMES.

CHAPTER I.

LYING IN WAIT.

ALTHOUGH the people of the South suffered immensely in every portion of her territory during the late Civil War, so fearful were their disasters in the line of Sherman's grand march, that the year 1864 and the first part of 1865 stand prominent in the annals of their anguish. Few of Georgia and South Carolina can recall the miseries of those days without a mental prayer that the great American people may never again be the sufferers or the perpetrators of similar atrocities.

It was in the month of May, 1864, when the army of Sherman, under the guidance of that famous or infamous chief—posterity will decide which descriptive he won in that year—began the campaign which resulted in the fall of Atlanta.

From the frontiers of Northern Georgia, and long after the shells of the Federal guns had continued daily to slaughter the women and children of the hard-pressed city, the gallant army of Confederates had contested every foot of Georgian soil, until, on the night of September 1st, the rush and roar of retreating troops, the explosion of stores of ammunition, and the terrible confusion seen everywhere, announced that General Hood, the Confederate chief, was evacuating the city.

At that period, the exhausted Confederacy was unable to replenish her depleted ranks, while the heavy losses of the enemy were easily repaired from the millions of the North, aided by the torrent of emigration flowing unceasingly from the shores of Europe. Her people had fought until the world raised its hands in wonder; but the overwhelming odds were fast bearing her patriotic prowess to the dust.

The metaphorical "anaconda" had become a fact, and one by one the strong bones of the unhappy Confederacy were crushed—New Orleans, Vicksburg, Nashville, Memphis, Chattanooga,—and now the beautiful Gate City was to writhe in the scaly folds of the monster.

For several days it had been feared by the citizens that their defenders were about to leave the city; still there were hundreds upon whom the certainty fell like a thunderbolt, and the eagerness to depart filled the streets with confusion. Many succeeded in leaving, and the hospitable

cities of Macon, Augusta, Columbus, and Savannah opened wide their generous arms to shelter these fugitives.

But there were many who remained. Some of these were renegades to the South, lip-patriots who had fattened upon her vitals, and heaped up riches, snatched from the mouths of her famishing troops and starving people. These prepared to clasp the hands of men whose daily toil had been to slaughter the kinsmen of these craven-hearted recreants; these ran out the flag of the invader from their windows, and made ready their tongues to sputter "loyal sentiments," and to bend their knees to those whose uniform was drenched in the best blood of the South.

But there were hundreds who could not follow the retreating army, and among them were Mrs. Preston M'Donald and her daughter Myrtis. They were types of those noble women, the matron and the maiden of the South, whose glory of patriotic fortitude and sacrifice will form themes for the poet and the orator while the memory of the war remains upon the pages of history.

We may claim a little space to describe them, as they are to be our heroines in this story.

Mrs. Preston M'Donald, as her name declares, was of the noble and famous families of the South; related by blood to the Prestons and the Hamptons of South Carolina, and by marriage to the M'Donalds of Georgia. A tall and stately lady, whose ebon garb of widowhood added to the dignity and impressiveness of her appearance, and

whose pale and care-worn features had not lost those lineaments of beauty which had won for her, in her youth, the appellation of the "Belle of Charleston."

But time, and care, and sorrow for the loss of her husband and sons had prematurely blanched her hair and attenuated her form ; yet the fire of her dark and splendid eyes glowed as unsubdued, if not as sparkling, as when she charmed with her beauty and spirit the gay and gallant fathers of those young heroes who so long and so successfully defended the Palmetto City from the fleets of Lincoln, or who so bravely immortalized the blood of South Carolina upon the soil of Virginia.

The war had swept from her side a devoted husband, who sealed his loyalty to Southern independence with his heart's blood at Manassas ; and when Atlanta fell, the widow knew that the reaper Death had cast into bloody graves five of the six daring sons her fond eyes had tearfully seen hurry from a luxurious home to repel the invader.

The sixth, the last, the youngest, the best-beloved of that idolized band, the laughing, merry-hearted Rutledge, whose lip was scarcely shaded by the beard of early manhood, who had been called from the poesy of Horace and Virgil to the sterner studies of the camp and field, when last her heart was gladdened by tidings of his welfare, was grasping his sabre under the command and near the person of that prince of Southern cavaliers, General Wade Hampton.

War, spoliation, the torch, arbitrary and despotic proclamations had robbed her of the wealth which in time of peace she had distributed with that lavish hospitality and princely charity so eminently characteristic of the wealthy Southern matron. The home she had inherited from her father, upon one of those islands early seized by the invader, had been despoiled, and desecrated to the use of New England "reverends;" and in that parlor where her father had entertained the Piuckneys, the Rutledges, the Elliots, the Prestons, and hundreds of other bright names of the Palmetto State, she knew people, white people of Puritanic descent, taught negro children to sing

"The soul of John Brown is marching on.
Hallelujah!"

Her husband's home in Northern Georgia had been burned to the ground, in obedience to that policy which marked Shermanic warfare, and which commanded that, when a Federal fell by the avenging bullet of some unknown Southerner, all the houses of the unoffending citizens, for miles around, should burn to appease the manes of the slain.

But one daughter, the beautiful Myrtis, had been born to Mrs. Preston McDonald, and that daughter was by her side as she gazed mournfully upon the departing rear-guard of their Confederate defenders.

It was night; but the glare of hundreds of torches, and

the blaze of many fires feeding upon army stores, plainly revealed the features of the mother and daughter as they stood upon the balcony of their house. Crouching by their side, and peering through the railing of the balcony, was the aged and faithful negress Myra, the last of the scores who, a few years before, called Mrs. M'Donald mistress.

Beautiful as a dream which enchants the soul, Myrtis M'Donald leaned far over the balcony, as if eagerly seeking the face of some beloved one amid that rush of battle-stained troops. Cavalry, infantry, and artillery, with a mob of citizens, all hurried on in hot haste, little heed being given, in all that excitement, to the orders of the commanding officers.

"Boys and gray-haired men," said Mrs. M'Donald, as she gazed upon the living torrent; "the last hope of the State has failed to save Atlanta. Nearly all we see with arms are the militia of Georgia—the old white-headed sires and the beardless boys. They have been snatched from their homes, with the kisses of wives and mothers yet warm upon their cheeks, to battle with the veteran troops of Sherman. How pale, and haggard, and worn they look!"

"And should they not, mother?" asked Myrtis. "For weary weeks they have been lying in the trenches, holding Sherman at bay. Oh, all honor to the noble militia of Georgia! They have fought like veterans—fought like

heroes for their native soil—fought while ragged, half-famished, illy armed, and scarcely able to stand erect.”

“Miss Myrtie, look ober dar,” said old Myra, pointing her long, shriveled finger toward a man on the opposite side of the street, peering from a window.

“Oh, Heaven!” exclaimed Myrtis M'Donald, clinging to her mother's arm, as her eye fell upon this man; “I thought he was dead.”

“And I hoped so,” replied Mrs. M'Donald. “God forgive me for the wish, but when I heard that a Confederate cavalryman had smitten Seth Cashmore's head from his shoulders, I prayed that the report might be true.”

“He got a lick, he got a lick, anyhow,” said old Myra, chuckling over the fact; “see de bandage aroun' his head. Pity the 'Federate didn't cut it off!”

The object of these uncomplimentary remarks, wholly unconscious of the disgust his presence excited upon the balcony, leaned his ungainly form far from the window, eagerly regarding the passing troops. The glare of the flames lighted up a pale and ghastly face embayed in bushy whiskers of inky blackness. The forehead, naturally low and narrow, was made still more so at the moment by the kerchief of black silk bound around his head, leaving scarcely an inch of the brow to be seen above the heavy black eyebrows, beneath which a pair of large, protruding eyes glowed like coals of fire.

The other features of the repulsive countenance partook

largely both of the Hebrew and Yankee caste—that lower Hebrew style which speaks only of the mercenary and sensual ; that common Yankee type, which tells of cunning, cruelty, and unscrupulous trickery. The huge, hooked nose of the Jew, and the wide, thin-lipped mouth of the Yankee pedler, united in this ghoul-like face like the distortions of a comic mask, only that there was nothing comic, but much that was cowardly and ferocious, in the visage.

“My daughter, he must not see us,” hastily remarked Mrs. M'Donald, as she retired from the balcony into the apartment with which it connected. “In, Myrtis, in !”

“Mother, though I hate him, I do not fear him ;” replied the daughter. “Besides, I wish—”

“I know your wish, my child,” exclaimed Mrs. M'Donald, grasping her arm, and gently forcing her from the balcony. “You wish to exchange a parting word with Captain Bartow, but he may not pass this way—he may have gone already—he may not be able to leave the hospital.”

“Oh, mother, do not frighten me. If Frank is able to leave the hospital, he will pass by our house ; and if he is not, he must not be abandoned to the Yankees. His very name, Frank Bartow, would bring death upon him.”

“Yonder come Mass' Frank now,” said Myra. “Way up the street, Miss Myrtie,” she continued, as the impulsive girl returned to the balcony.

“I see him ! I see him ! I would know him among a

million!" exclaimed the young lady, clasping her hands joyfully, and gazing up the street.

"Yes, yes! and old ugly ober dar, see him too," muttered Myra. "He up to some mischief. Pity Massa Frank gwine to come dis a way. 'Pears to me, Mr. Cashmore got a pistolum in his hand. Look, missus—ain't he got a pistolum? Sorter hid like, under his big han' on de winder-sill. Dar! seed it shine!"

"Myrtis, Myrtis!" exclaimed Mrs. M'Donald, "I believe Myra is right. Cashmore means mischief—he has a pistol concealed under his arm and hand, as he leans from the window."

"He would not dare shoot at Frank among all those soldiers!"

"You know he hates Captain Bartow, and why he hates him—because you love him," replied Mrs. M'Donald. "Strange that he does not look across the street at us!"

But Mr. Seth Cashmore's attention was fixed upon the person of a young man wearing the uniform of a captain of Confederate cavalry, who was slowly riding down the street upon a sorry horse, and riding with difficulty, for his right arm was in a sling, and his air that of a man barely convalescent from a serious wound.

This young man, bearing one of the most illustrious names of Georgia, and not very distantly related by blood to the noble Georgian who fell at the first Manassas, was Captain Frank Bartow, and the accepted lover of the beau-

tiful Myrtis M'Donald. Like his illustrious namesake and kinsman, he had sprung to arms at the first alarm of war. One of those young heroes of '61, who from mere smooth-faced boys have grown to be stalwart, bearded men amid the smoke of battle, he had gallantly fought through three years and more of the mighty struggle in which, for so long a time, the eight millions of the South had withstood the twenty millions of the North, backed by the surplus millions of Europe.

At the first Manassas he had seen the braggart legions of McDowell fly like panic-stricken sheep before Johnston and Beauregard; in the Valley, with immortal Stonewall, he had seen the blue hosts of Fremont and Banks dissolve before the tactics of that great leader like the smoke scattered by the wind; at Richmond, for days he had seen the Federal host under McClellan beaten, routed, tossed in confusion to the celebrated "change of base" by the soldiers of Lee, of the Hills, of Jackson, and Johnston, and of other great names which every heart of the South bears engraved in letters of love and honor upon its most sacred tablets.

Wounded again and again, as soon as recovered he had returned to the camp and field, until circumstances placed him in July, 1864, severely wounded in the right shoulder, in one of the hospitals of Atlanta. Convalescing there, under the careful attention of the ladies of Atlanta, and the relief committees from every part of the patriotic State,

we see him, in the glare of torches and of the flames of burning houses, slowly making his way along the fugitive-crowded street, over which extended the balcony of the last remaining house of the M'Donalds.

Seth Cashmore had no sooner recognized this young man, who presented a noble and martial figure, despite his feebleness, than his protuberant eyes seemed to grow larger, and to gleam more fiercely. Less cautious than before, he moved his arm so that Mrs. M'Donald no longer had any doubt that he had a pistol, while his eager and restless air denoted an intention to attempt some daring deed.

"Mother, he certainly means evil to Frank!" exclaimed Myrtis. "How shall we warn poor Frank, whose whole attention is occupied in forcing a way through the crowd? I must try to save him."

With these words, and not pausing to heed the expostulations of her mother, the brave young lady rushed back into the apartment, and thence to a flight of stairs, which she descended in heedless and dangerous haste.

A moment after, Mrs. M'Donald beheld her white hands stretching toward the young cavalryman, as her dark robe was lost to sight in the crowd.

"Heaven guard my child!" thought the unhappy mother. "Oh, why should she be so rash? She may fall, and be trampled to death."

Straining her eyes, she now and then caught a glimpse

of the dark glossy curls of her daughter, apparently tossed here and there in the current of that living stream, or thought that she saw them, as Myrtis struggled on against the tide of fugitives, above which rose the roar of flames, the explosion of army stores in various parts of the city, the fierce and impatient cries of the soldiers and citizens, and the shrill screams of women and children.

“My God! she will be crushed to death!” exclaimed the mother. “Myra! Myra! what shall we do?”

She turned toward that part of the balcony in which she had last seen the old negress, and started with alarm as she saw that it was vacant.

The negress had disappeared. Unseen by her mistress, Myra had glided away in pursuit of Myrtis, and now was but a struggling atom in that sea of confusion.

“I can but pray,” murmured Mrs. M'Donald, raising her eyes to heaven in eloquent though wordless supplication for the preservation of her child.

Numberless had been the prayers spoken by her pious lips, since the dread war had shattered the golden harp of domestic harmony and happiness, and she had shed bitter tears over the untimely death of her beloved husband, and over the still more untimely deaths of her five noble sons, as one by one they fell before the sword of the invader; but never had her faith in the wisdom and mercy of Heaven been shaken. “The will of God be done!” she said, as she wept and when the first fierce tempest of grief had

swept through her soul. She prayed on and trusted ever.

The unshaken piety and pure morality of the women of the South throughout that terrible war, form two of the noblest, most admirable jewels in that crown of patriotic glory with which applauding posterity and truthful history will honor the mothers and daughters of "The Land we love," the oppressed and conquered Land of the South.

The men of the South, fired by their love for glory, or by ambition, or by the warlike ardor inherent with their birth, rushed to battle to lose the agony of separation from home and its ties, amid the excitements of the hurried march, the war of conflict, and the toils of the retreat. It was the infinitely more painful fate of the women of the South, to behold their beloved ones borne home, wounded or dead; to see their wounded restored to health, only to see them return to the perils of war; to mourn over their memory as they rested in bloody and unknown graves; or to behold even the graves of their beloved dead desecrated by hyena-like invaders profaning the tomb in lawless, brutal search for Southern gold; to meet the bully, the ruffian, the tyrant soldiers of the North, at their defenceless thresholds; to hear their ribald insults; to submit to their *commanded* plundering; to witness the flames of their homes; to see their little children growing thin and pale, and ragged, under the hand of want, thrust upon them with the point of the bayonet; to bear witness before the world and Heav-

en, that the wish of the Abolition editors of the North had been made fact by the generals they had bayed into office—"the time when the women of the South should grow pale and haggard with hunger, and turn helpless eyes upon their starving children crying for bread."

Such was the trial, and more from which our pen recoils, forced upon the patriotic women of the South.

And they bore it unflinchingly, for their patriotism was as pure as the light of heaven.

But we must not pause here to eulogize that which rises far above all eulogy. Mrs. Preston M'Donald, in her brilliant virtues of piety, patience, fortitude, and enduring patriotism, is but a type of the Southern women of Southern homes, from the Potomac to the Rio Grande, and from the sea to the Ohio, and wherever beats the Southern heart.

Seth Cashmore, one of those base and vampire spirits which flitted through the night of Civil War, and battered upon the wants of the impoverished South, a speculator in the necessities of life, one who thought more of a sack of salt than of a nationality, and who trampled upon every noble principle in his devilish greed for money, had grown rich at the South long before the sword was put to Southern throats by Northern fanaticism. Originally a pedler, then a "drummer," then an agent, then a flourishing merchant, and, when the war began, a slaveholder, and one of the infamous kind, unable to understand, or too unprinci-

pled to regard that peculiar institution of the land he disgraced, he cursed his adopted country.

But he soon turned his negroes into gold, and having unshaken confidence in the prowess of the North, he carefully abstained from all politics, bending all his energies to to the safer and more remunerative labor of the speculator.

But every fibre of his soul had been smitten by the beauty of Myrtis M'Donald, whose early loveliness he had remarked when she was but a child. There was nothing in his face or form to create liking, much less love, and yet he, like all extremely ugly men, believed he had many notable points of beauty. Besides, he was rich, and the time, when the M'Donalds were richer than he, had passed. Some men become infatuated with an idea, and in riding a hobby commit a thousand incredible follies. For that idea they have plunged a nation into a sea of ruin. But Seth Cashmore's idea savored nothing of politics. True, he hated the South and the Southerners. That was natural, for he hailed from the very shadow of the Rock of Plymouth, and probably played marbles with young free negroes in his youth. But his idea was to be the husband of the handsomest woman in the South, to take her North, to parade the Southern belle as his captive, to tell how that beauty was of the first families of Republican aristocracy; and, having concluded that Miss Myrtis M'Donald was the loveliest girl in Dixie, he had resolved to make her his wife. In forming this resolution he dwelt so long upon it, that

the resolve became his idea, his passion, and, as he believed, his destiny.

Poverty, extreme poverty, had fallen upon the M'Donalds during the siege of Atlanta. There had been times when for days both mother and daughter had lived upon meal and water.

It cannot be denied that at such times of distress they remembered the lavish profusion of the M'Donald table in times of peace ; remembered it with heavy hearts, and eager longings for that by-gone abundance. Yet their patriotism never wavered nor faltered. Had Atlanta been a walled city, and had the warfare been that of ancient days, history would have recorded that the fiery patriotism of the women of the South was no less than that of the women of Carthage, or Rome, or Greece.

It was in these days of suffering that Seth Cashmore had built high hopes of success, and in the guise of a sincere friend he had visited the poverty-stricken family. The widow needed a friend, the maiden needed a protector. He would be that friend ; he would be that protector ; indeed, he would be the guardian angel of that house, sheltering beneath his shielding wings even the humble negress.

The speculator, had he been sincere, would have gained esteem and gratitude, and perhaps friendship—though there was a curse upon him from Nature's hand, an intrusive, bustling air of pompous pretension, which repelled friendship, and produced indifference 'if not dislike—dislike if

not disgust, and disgust if not hate. The rumor of his many deeds of grinding oppression upon the wives and children of Confederate soldiers, had preceded his intrusion upon the poverty of the M'Donalds, and they met his proffers of assistance with a dignified refusal. But Seth Cashmore was not a man to be rebuffed by dignified bearing. He was of that lower stratum of mortality which must have its nose pulled, or its face slapped, or perceive the uprising of an indignant foot, before it can be made to understand that it is an object of contempt.

The M'Donalds, steeped to the lips in poverty, all the more feeble in the fierce struggle between Pride and Want, because they had been precipitated from affluence to penury, were forced to accept his pretended generosity, and as he, like all his class, possessed a wheedling, persuasive tongue, he gradually beat down the barriers of dislike and disgust encountered on his first approach.

Had he paused there, Seth Cashmore might have dwelt upon the minds of the M'Donalds as a kind and charitable man, and found himself so esteemed by them, at least. But presuming, as viler natures ever will, upon the warmth of grateful words, he mistook his worth and demanded love.

It was to Mrs. Preston M'Donald that the speculator made known his aspirations, and though the propositions, however elegantly expressed, would have startled her, they were revolting to every refined sentiment of her soul as he declared them.

"Mrs. M'Donald, I have a proposal to make," he said, in advancing his desires, and speaking in the same tone and manner he would have used in buying or selling any of the articles in which he speculated. "You see you and Miss Myrtis are very hard up. You have lost every thing, down to that old nigger woman, who wouldn't fetch two hundred dollars in Confed'. Now, I am quite, or more so, well off. Miss Myrtis pleases my notion—she does, and if you and she have no objection, I am ready."

"I do not understand you, Mr. Cashmore!" exclaimed the surprised widow.

"Well, I ain't so clear in expressing myself in a thing of this kind, as I am in taking salt by the car-load," said Seth, quailing a little before a sudden fire which he had never seen in those handsome dark eyes until then. "You see I am a bachelor, going on right smartly toward forty years, though you may look my head over for a month and never find a gray hair—and I think I can afford to marry, in spite of the war; and, of all the women, old or young, Miss Myrtis caps my idea of what I want my wife to be. You are all living very hard, and the Yankees will soon make it harder. Atlanta's bound to go up, so's the Confederacy."

"Mr. Cashmore," interrupted Mrs. M'Donald, "my daughter has not been informed."

"That'll all be right!" broke in Cashmore, with a broad, coarse laugh of cunning. "I only want your con-

sent first, and I think you and me can soon manage the rest."

"Mr. Cashmore, I am very glad to learn that my daughter has been spared the mortification of any advances upon your part," replied Mrs. M'Donald, in a stately tone, which vibrated through his soul and gave him a keen appreciation of his insignificance. "Miss Myrtis M'Donald is the affianced wife of Captain Frank Bartow, and of course this conversation must cease."

"Affianced wife? Oh, that means she is already spoken for. Yes, I have heard that he was a little spooney about Miss Myrtis. But that's all a mere trifle. You and me—"

"Mr. Cashmore, you have twice coupled my name with yours. I reject this proposed intimacy. Do not speak to me again upon this subject; and, since you have spoken as you have, sir, I have no desire to hear you upon any subject."

"Just so," sneered the rebuked speculator, at last recognizing his position. "But I guess you'll think better before many days. This is always the way with you once 'somebodies' of the South. No more gratitude for charity than cows for cabbage—"

Mrs. M'Donald did not remain to listen to the coarse insults of the angry speculator, but swept from the room, leaving him to vent his spleen upon the bare walls.

They were bare, and this fact formed the burden of

the wretched creature's soliloquy as he drew on his gloves to depart.

"She's as proud as if she had a thousand niggers, as many as that rebel kinsman of hers, Wade Hampton, whom I hope Phil Sheridan will catch and hang very soon. Proud of what, I'd like to know? Proud of this empty house—it's all she's got, and I hold a mortgage on it. Bare floors, bare walls! Tore up your carpets to make blankets for rebel rascals, eh? Tore down your curtains to make shirts and the like for rebel dogs, eh? Tore out the lead window-weights to make bullets for rebel muskets, eh? Sold all your ornaments and paintings, except your family portraits, to buy Confederate bonds, to bolster up old Memminger's shinplasters, eh? Sold and gave away all your plate and jewelry to aid the Southern Confederacy, eh? Gave all your fine linen to wounded rebels, eh? Wear homespun and coarse jeans, and eat meal and drink water for love of Southern independence, eh? More fool you, and all like you. Wait until old Sherman turns his boys loose on your ragged, worm-eaten Confederacy, and you will understand what patriotism means. He wasn't named Tecumseh for nothing, mind that. I am turned off, am I? Very well, I think this establishment owes me something. As for the mortgage, that'll have to rest until after the war."

Consoling his wounded vanity with these savory morsels of reflection, Mr. Seth Cashmore returned to his store

and amused himself with the woes and wants of scores of famishing women and children, as he drove extortionate bargains with them for the relics of their former means.

But his evil fortune would not allow him to remain satisfied with the dismissal from Mrs. M'Donald, and the more he dwelt upon that fact the more he resolved to persevere. The dismissal made the object of his passion more valuable in his eyes, and he had effrontery enough to propose to Miss Myrtis. Being rejected very politely by the young lady, he pressed his claims with such vehemence as to arouse her anger, and then he received so severe a reprimand for his boldness and coarseness, that he retorted with threats and sneers.

This happened a few days before Captain Bartow was wounded, as we have already stated, and Mr. Seth Cashmore's conduct was duly reported to the young cavalryman by old Myra, in a moment of indignation.

Mr. Cashmore, in walking Whitehall Street one evening, after personally dunning Mrs. M'Donald for what he had done in the way of meal, flour, etc., as a friend, claiming its value as a debt, since his alliance was refused, was overtaken by a tall young gentleman with a fierce mustache, and a fiercer pair of hazel eyes, who wore the uniform of a Confederate captain.

A smart tap upon the shoulder caused Mr. Cashmore to pause and face this gentleman, who was unknown to him.

"Mr. Seth Cashmore, I believe?" said the officer, in a very steady tone, though his eyes sparkled ominously.

"Yes, I am Seth Cashmore. Who are you?" replied the pompous and coarse-mannered speculator, not perceiving that the officer held something behind him, that something being very similar to that implement which Brooks of South Carolina introduced to the notice of Charles Sumner of Massachusetts.

"I am Frank Bartow, captain in the Confederate service. You have heard of me, I imagine. I think it my duty to inform you publicly, that you are a cowardly scoundrel, and deserve a public flogging."

With these words Frank Bartow grasped Seth Cashmore by the whiskers, and then and there administered one of the heartiest and severest castigations ever received by a speculator, and which was received by Seth Cashmore with divers yells and contortions delightful to hear and to behold.

The administration of justice did not cease until the implement used was shattered to the grasp of the inflictor.

On being freed from the iron clutch of that indignant hand, Mr. Seth Cashmore did not anticipate the stoical philosophy of Grinnell, lately dressed in a similar style of stripes by General Rousseau. He did not stoop to pick up one of the fragments of the cane shattered upon his

face, and say, "I will take this home to my wife," as did Mr. Grinnell, for Seth had no wife, nor had he the stoicism of that milk-and-water Congressman, but he had heels, and he took to them with an alacrity truly refreshing to behold, pursued by the hoots and screams of half a regiment of derisive urchins of Atlanta.

Seth Cashmore was of too malicious and revengeful a nature not to resent this just punishment, but he was spider-like in his resentment. He plotted and waited. He wove his web and watched.

A few days after this scene Captain Frank Bartow was severely wounded, and became an inmate of the hospital. Thus Seth Cashmore derived some comfort; but he felt that he could not go whining about, showing his scars in the fashion of the before-mentioned Charles Sumner, and that nothing less than the death of his enemy could soothe his aches and bruises.

To add to his desire for revenge, it chanced that he aroused the ire of a cavalryman in attempting to overreach the soldier in a tobacco trade, and thereupon received a sabre-cut on the head, which laid him out as dead for hours. On regaining his senses he learned that one of his stores had been plundered, even to the cellar, by cavalrymen. Therefore he had little love for cavalrymen, and especially for Captain Bartow, to whom he falsely attributed all his calamities.

The reader may now perceive why Mr. Seth Cashmore watched with evil intent as Frank Bartow slowly rode down that crowded street of Atlanta, on the night of September 1st, 1864.

CHAPTER II.

THE ATTEMPT.

MR. SETH CASHMORE was well informed of the movements going on throughout the city, and having resolved to cast himself into the Federal bosom, and knowing that the M'Donalds were unable to leave the city before the Federals would march in, determined to have one shot at least at the lover of Myrtis.

He had seen the mother and daughter on the balcony long before they perceived him, and knew very well why Myrtis M'Donald gazed so eagerly up the street, but it was no part of his plans that they should suspect that he had seen, or was thinking of them. He knew that Captain Bartow would pass along that street, and pause beneath that balcony to bid farewell to Miss M'Donald, and he felt confident that he could drive a ball through the lover's body—firing from that window. He had calculated all the chances for escape, and had his cunning hiding-places if pursued. But amid all that confusion, with the rear-guard of the Confederate army evacuating—that rear-guard prin-

cipally undisciplined militia—the whole city in alarm and disorder, a victorious army ready to dash in to plunder the place, the disturbance incident to the vast destruction already going on—with all these to obscure the deed and aid his hiding until no Confederate remained to avenge, there was, apparently, little danger in making a leaden pellet settle his difficulty very satisfactorily with Captain Frank Bartow.

It was very true that the M'Donalds might, and in all probability would know Seth Cashmore to be the assassin. No care for that. They would be more than ever at his mercy within twenty-four hours, for he had powerful friends out there in that great Federal army, raging to leap upon the defenceless city—indeed, his services as a spy in the Confederate camp were well known to Sherman himself, and his name was recorded yonder at Washington in the shadow of the great man who “rang a little bell,” as a good and loyal Union man.

To kill a rebel captain, then, would be a card of honor for Mr. Seth Cashmore, although the deed might well be called rank assassination, and place him still higher in the esteem of some of his Federal friends.

The house in which he lurked was empty. Its former occupants had fled, after losing a mother and a little child by the explosion of one of Sherman's missiles of love and humanity, so much in unison with that policy with which he waged the war for the restoration of the Union.

Leading from the yard in the rear of the house was a narrow alley, opening upon a back street. The deed accomplished, he could easily fly through the house, the yard, the alley, and from the street find one of his hiding-places, among other "loyal Union men," who were impatiently awaiting the hour when they could fling to the breeze those long-hidden flags of stars and stripes.

Thus confident, he awaited the slow approach of his intended victim.

Captain Frank Bartow's attention had been fully occupied in picking his way along the rushing mass, until he reached a spot about fifty yards distant from the residence of the M'Donalds, when he raised his eyes and looked toward the balcony. He saw the well-known form and face of Mrs. M'Donald, and supposed that his betrothed was also there. The crowd, from some unknown cause, now seemed to recoil upon itself, and thus a dense mass of horses and human beings was held almost stationary between him and the balcony, while the cries of impatience and confusion were redoubled.

No doubt there were many in the mob eager to reach the burning stores, that they might plunder. There were many half-famished women there who had heard that army stores of meal, flour, and meat were being given away, thrown away, destroyed, and they added the clamor of their shrill voices to the sounds of the tumult.

Upon these poor creatures, who were half crazed by

the terrible calamities war had forced upon them, Frank Bartow bent a pitying gaze. But in casting his eyes about they suddenly encountered a face, the sight of which caused his heart to leap to his throat. There in the very centre of the crowd, whither her struggles had forced her, he recognized the beautiful face of Myrtis M'Donald, and though he could not distinguish her words, he knew she was speaking, and earnestly, while with one hand she pointed toward some object above the street.

The progress of the throng had now carried him within twenty yards of the balcony. Myrtis M'Donald had found it impossible to stem the torrent which swept fiercely toward the burning stores. The current had overcome her strength and begun to bear her along with it.

She would have fallen and probably have perished there, had not old Myra, strong though aged, now reached her side and battled to aid her in regaining the pavement.

It was at that moment that Frank Bartow recognized his betrothed, and noticed that she was pointing at something above the level of the crowd.

Meanwhile Mrs. M'Donald had succeeded in distinguishing the head of her daughter, just as the faithful Myra had forced her way to the side of her young mistress. She could see that her daughter was gesticulating violently, and pointing toward the window occupied by Seth Cashmore. Turning her own eyes in that direction, she saw Cashmore grasp and level his pistol—saw the flash, but could not dis-

tinguish the report amid that Babel of sounds, especially as Cashmore had stepped a pace or two back from the window at the instant before he fired. She then glanced toward Captain Frank Bartow and saw that he was lying with his face upon the neck of his horse, and apparently clinging to the mane of the animal, as if wounded.

"Oh Heaven! Frank Bartow is shot!" exclaimed Mrs. M'Donald.

But this apprehension was removed the next instant, as she saw the young officer resume his erect seat in the saddle and extend his hand toward Myrtis M'Donald, with a smile upon his face.

But Seth Cashmore darted from the window rejoicing in the belief that his shot had proved true. He had seen Captain Bartow fall upon the neck of his horse at the instant he drew trigger, and, supposing that he had severely, if not mortally, wounded him, instantly betook himself to flight. Captain Bartow, however, had seen him level the pistol, and, accustomed to such attacks, threw himself out of range, and escaped unhurt.

"I owe my life to your devotion, Myrtis," he said, as he at length reached her side and clasped her hand. "Had I not seen your warning at the instant I did, that coward's bullet would have struck me down."

"And but for the assistance of our brave old Myra," replied Miss M'Donald, warmly, "I would have fallen and been trampled upon before I caught your eye."

They were now immediately under the balcony, and Mrs. M'Donald, leaning over, cried out :

"Come up, my daughter ! Come up, Captain Bartow."

"Unless your mother can invent some way by which I can carry my horse up with me," said Captain Bartow, with a smile, to Myrtis, "I must decline the invitation. My horse is a very sorry one, though I gave a fine gold watch for him, and he is my only means of leaving the city. The Yankees will occupy the city before to-morrow night, and I have no desire to try the Federal hospitalities of Camp Chase, or Fort Delaware, or any other quarters of that kind. Had I been able to attend to this matter, I would have provided means for you and your mother to leave the city."

"Oh, we both know that, Frank," replied Miss M'Donald. "But until to-day dear mother has been confined to her bed, for nearly a week, and is not strong enough to encounter the fatigue of a flight. Besides, we seem to be followed by misfortune in the shape of Yankees."

"An', Lor' bless my soul !" broke in old Myra, with the privilege of a faithful servant, "dem Yankees is de greatest misfortune dat eber cussed de Souf. Massa Frank, we refugeed from the islan's, case dem Yankees gib de old family home to niggers for a schoolhous'—drat all sich idees ! then we refugeed from Rome, case de Yankees piled in dar, and now the Yankees gwine to pile in he-yar ! Why can't dey jus mind dar own illegitimate business."

"It is the business of the Yankee to mind the business of others—at least they so construe the Constitution," said Captain Bartow. "But, Myrtis, as soon as the health of your mother will permit, I hope you will leave Atlanta."

"To go where, my dear sir?" asked Mrs. M'Donald, who, finding that the lovers would not ascend to the balcony, had descended to take part in the conversation. "This is our last house, if indeed we may claim it as ours, for I have heard that Seth Cashmore says that he holds a mortgage on it. I know my husband once had dealings with this fellow Cashmore—it was in 1861, to raise money in uniforming and equipping military companies, and perhaps Cashmore does hold a mortgage. Our home on the islands is in Yankee and negro hands; our home in Rome, and our plantation in Cherokee, are also in the same hostile possession. Our relatives in Georgia and in South Carolina are all hard pressed, many ruined. I think somewhat seriously of going to Columbia, South Carolina, where—"

"Dem Yankees gwine dar sure!" cried old Myra, who was as good a prophetess as could be found in any editor's sanctum, and better than the majority. "I tell you, missus, dar's no use a tryin' to run from dem blue locusses—day gwine to swarm ober and devour de fat and de lean ob de Souf. Dat's what God made dem for—dey's a cuss! Columby? Why de Yankees would go clean crazy, missus, if dis war ended widout a chance to ruinate and abominate

Columby. De Yankees hates all the Souf, but the Lor' ! hate ain't de word for what dey thinks ob de Souf K'leenians ! You go to Columby, an' dar'll you'll see Sodom an' Jeremiah de way de Yankees fixes it up. Mind old mommie—she's a nigger, but she knows de Yankees from de har ob dare head to de horn ob dare heel. 'Sides, she knows General Sherman."

"Ah ! you have that pleasure !" said Captain Bartow, laughing.

"I knows him ! I knows him !" cried old Myra, wagging her head ; "missus does too."

"I !" exclaimed Mrs. M'Donald.

"Yes, missus. Do we forget that time you visited Louisiana ? General Sherman used to keep school dar. He came Souf to make an honest livin' ; s'pose he found no chance to do dat in the Norf, so he teached de Louisiana children how to read an' write, an' skypher, an' all dat sort ob thing. He made money at dat—de Yankees make money at pisening bed-bugs—course he make money and go back to de Norf. Now he turn up wid a million and a haf of blue locusses wid de intention ob makin' us see stars and feel de stripes ob de flag ob de Union ! I seed him in Louisiana—keen, little eyes—sharp ! You look out, folkses !"

While the old negress continued to rattle off her ideas of the hero of the Grand March, Captain Bartow advised Mrs. M'Donald not to go to Columbia.

Heaven only knows where Sherman may halt," said he. "Now that Atlanta falls into his hands, he may push straight on for Augusta, and thence to Columbia. The State of Georgia is now at his mercy; he may not know it, and may delay here in Atlanta for months, merely to ravage the country. The Fates are plainly against our cause at this time, though the wheel of Fortune may take a turn and bring us uppermost. Let us hope so, at least, and continue the struggle as long as the Army of Virginia and its heroic generals bear up our sinking flag. I shall soon be strong enough, I hope, to take the field again."

"Ah, you are ever mindful of the dying words of the noble Francis Bartow: 'They've killed me, boys—but never give it up!' Brave and gallant gentleman, I knew him well. 'I go to illustrate Georgia;' and nobly did your gallant kinsman illustrate his State; and if ever the time comes when no Yankee satrap can issue orders which in Southern ears sound like hyenas growling over the bones of dead men, Georgia's sons and daughters will vie in erecting a stately monument to the memory of her noble dead, among whose hallowed names the least shall not be General Francis S. Bartow."

"He died like a Bayard," replied the young officer, "and in the first great battle of the war. May the same noble pride in the honor and integrity of his State, and the same high Southern patriotism be mine, though my life like his, should seal that devotion!"

"Massa General Bartow bery rash, bery rash," said old Myra, "doe I mus' say dat anybody what puts hisself in de way ob bullets, is rash. S'pose dat's patriotism. All right. Got to whip dem blue locusses or hab noffin lef' to pray for. But no need, Massa Frank, of yer bein' preboisterously rash in dat way."

"The blue locusts you speak of, Myra, compel us to be rash. Their guns are of such long range, and shoot so many times, that our soldiers do not have fair play. But I must now bid you farewell, Mrs. M'Donald. I expect to join the command of General Wheeler, as soon as I can bear fatigue. Should you leave Atlanta, try to communicate with me. It is difficult to advise you where to go for permanent safety. The whole State will probably be overrun by marauding parties, as that is the policy of the Federal generals. But excuse me for the presumption, what Confederate money may you have?"

"That is soon answered, Frank," exclaimed Myrtis, with less pride than her mother in the matter. "Seth Cashmore received our last Confederate dollar, or rather his clerk, yesterday, in payment of what Cashmore called a gift when he brought it to our house."

"And you are remaining in Atlanta without a dollar?"

"At least, there are hundreds as poor," said Mrs. M'Donald. "True, we have a few family relics in the shape of mourning rings, and I think Myrtis has a golden napkin

ring which General John Preston gave her when her first birthday came round."

"You cannot live long upon them," remarked Captain Bartow, drawing a ring from his finger. "Will Myrtis accept this from Frank, who may never see her again? It is a diamond, and I think valued at two hundred dollars in gold, before the war—"

"Oh, Frank! it was your father's?" cried Myrtis.

"Very true. It is really all the Yankees have left of all he gave me, except bare land and black ashes," replied the young officer; "and if I wear it, it is very probable they may rifle me of that, for I anticipate hot cavalry fighting under Wheeler; and like General Joe Johnston, it is always my luck to be wounded. Keep it, my dear girl—it may go far to aid you and your mother during the dark days ahead. No! I will not take it back."

Perceiving the firmness of his tone, and knowing him to be very resolute, the beautiful girl placed it upon her thumb, her tiny fingers being all too small for the ring, and resolved that nothing save grim starvation in all its horrors, should force it from her.

"Farewell! and may Heaven guard you, Mrs. M'Donald, and grant you a speedy deliverance from the mercies of Sherman and his army. And you, too, dear Myrtis."

He bent from the saddle, and pressed a respectful kiss upon the cheek of the weeping widow, whose firmness gave way in parting with one who seemed almost a son.

Regardless of the place and the time, the warm-hearted Southern girl threw her white arms around her lover's neck, and unable to utter the farewell so faintly spoken by her mother, pressed her lips close to his in that kiss of love which expresses both despair and undying devotion ; for there were a thousand chances to one, against the probability of meeting him again.

She knew his headlong, reckless bravery in battle—his eagerness to seek danger, if that danger might carry his sword to the heart of a foe ; his readiness to volunteer upon every perilous enterprise ; his contempt for heavy odds of arms or numbers. All this was proved by a score of wounds, serious or slight, which he had received. She knew that bitter hate and cruel wrongs urged him to strike the invader, and that this intense personal feeling was equalled by as pure and proud a patriotism as ever burned in a soldier's heart.

Of those wrongs we may speak hereafter, though the young officer was not one to vent his feelings in words, and seldom spoke of his individual wrongs.

“ Good-by ! ” he said—the plain, simple word of adieu ever rises from the heart, instead of the more stately phrase “ farewell,” when loving ones are parting—“ good-by, and God bless you all ! ”

“ God guard you and the holy cause of our country ! ” replied Mrs. M'Donald, while the tear-dimmed eyes of Myrtis spoke their blessing and adieu.

The homely farewell of the old negress, as she clasped her black hands in earnest supplication, scarcely reached his ear as the lover moved away, but he felt that he was leaving three hearts there in fallen Atlanta which would bleed should he fill a soldier's grave.

Returning to the balcony, followed by the faithful Myra, the now friendless mother and daughter gazed after the disappearing form of the officer until he was lost in a cloud of smoke rolling through the street.

"There departs the last true friend, whom I love as if my own son," said Mrs. M'Donald. "A noble young man, but oh, so rash, so daring!"

"Wouldn't be a Bartow if he wasn't jest what he is," remarked old Myra, brushing tears from her eyes. "I knows all de stock; knowed Massa General Bartow mighty well. Massa Frank same stock—mighty darin', fierce-like in battle. But dars one thing I didn't like, doe I orter not to speak ob dat now."

"What is it, Myra?" asked Mrs. M'Donald.

"Didn't like to see Massa Frank go out ob our sight in dat cloud ob smoke. I 'lowed as how ef he turned de corner dar, and got out ob sight naterally like, we'd be sure to see him agin. Sense he dis'peared in de smoke, I think it 'pears omniverous like."

"And why ominous, Myra?"

"Can't say why, missus, replied the old negress, wagging her head sagely. "It 'presses me like on de soul."

"Hush, Myra, look there !" whispered Mrs. M'Donald, pointing to her daughter.

Myrtis M'Donald, shocked by the foreboding of the negress, and much fatigued with the events of the night, was weeping bitterly, and Myra at once attempted to soothe her.

"Lor' bless you, honey ! this ole nigger is a fool—always was such a fool. Don't pine arter Massa Frank. Dare's something in his eye that says he's gwine to live till his hair is white—"

"There, Myra, that will do," commanded Mrs. M'Donald, as she wound her arms around her daughter's neck, and pressing that beautiful head to her bosom. "Look up, my child, and trust in God, who does all things aright. Come, let us retire. This scene of confusion is very painful."

"True, dear mother, and I have no wish to gaze upon poor Atlanta in her dying agonies," replied Myrtis, as they withdrew from the balcony, leaving the crowds of fugitives still surging through the streets.

And thus sank the Confederate banner from the long-beleaguered Gate City—sank amid the roar of flames, the fall of sulphurous smoke, the cries of the mob. Its defenders, after strewing the soil of Georgia with the bones of tens of thousands of the conquering invaders, from the frontiers of Tennessee to the suburbs of the city, withdrew in the darkness of the night, to battle elsewhere with

that same resolute patriotism, against the same resolute foe.

Bruised, shattered, mangled, defenceless, the unhappy city writhed through the horrors of that eventful night, awaiting with the sickening palpitation of terror the moment when the vultures of the North should bury their rending beaks in its quivering flesh.

But much of the suffering of that unfortunate city must remain untold in this story. Yet let it be remembered by all posterity that the cannon of the Federals hurled death-dealing shells into a city in which were hundreds of women and children. Let humanity shudder and civilization blush as history in recording the events of the siege of Atlanta, culls from the city sexton's reports of that time, ere the siege had reached its zenith of horrors :
“ *Up to date, thirty children killed by the bursting of shells thrown into the city by the Federals.*”

How many women, how many more children, how many old decrepit men, how many sick and wounded, were additional victims during this bloody siege ? Who can tell ? Imagination recoils from depicting fact as memory recalls the harrowing scenes of that barbarous warfare. The mother nursing her babe at a famished breast—blown to atoms, by a Federal shell ; the wife bathing the fevered brow of a dying husband—blown to atoms by a Federal shell ; the tender, laughing infant, cooing in its cradle—blown to atoms by a Federal shell ;

romping children—blown to atoms by a Federal shell ; the aged time-stricken grandfather, with his grandchild upon his knee—blown to atoms by a Federal shell—Federal shells bursting everywhere, in parlors, in dining-rooms, in kitchens, in churches, in hospitals, in the streets.

By whose command was this done ? Pass their names down, O Genius of History, until not a ray of their fictitious glory shall remain to shed light upon them. Inscribe them in the darkest niche of the temple of Fame, entwine them with a wreath of deadly nightshade and hellebore, with flowers whose perfume is laden with the noisome rankness of untimely graves. Let them remain as mementoes of the Abolition Crusade, and let them stand alone in their darkness.

CHAPTER III.

A NOBLE HEART UNDER A BLUE COAT.

THE Federals under General Slocum marched into the fallen city upon the following day, and the renegades who remained to reveal their true colors, hastened to display the flag of the invader, while all true Southern hearts bled over the disaster.

Mr. Seth Cashmore was immediately hand-and-glove with the Federals, and rapidly sold his secreted hoards of tobacco. He was exceedingly busy, too, in pointing out the homes and families of leading Confederates. Without intending to apologize for any of the acts of oppression, and deeds of plunder committed, we must admit that the number of barbarities, if not the intensity of revenge, was increased by the malice of Seth Cashmore and men like him, who curried favor with the invaders by denouncing prominent Southern patriots.

Mrs. M'Donald was not at all surprised, though greatly distressed, by the appearance of the heartless speculator during the day following the occupation of the city by the enemy, when Mr. Cashmore called to triumph in his

position and power, or to force the helpless widow to terms.

Myra answered his loud and insolent summons at the front door, and bluntly told him that his company was not wanted in that house.

"Servant like mistress, eh?" snarled Cashmore, pushing the old negress aside, and striding into the hall. "But it makes no difference with Seth Cashmore. I am master of this house. Where is Mrs. M'Donald? She had better see me. I tell you that. By the way, old woman, where's that rebel, Frank Bartow? I heard that he fell from his horse the other night, and was brought into this house."

"Almost wish Massa Frank was in dis house," replied Myra, boldly. "He'd mighty soon take you down. Massa Frank's all right, and you'll have to shoot better next time." So saying, Myra walked away.

"Ah, I see the rascal escaped after all," thought Cashmore. "I was sure I hit him just under the neck. No matter—the way is clear now. Perhaps these proud specimens of Southern female chivalry will come to terms. Hey!"

He began to fill the hall with insolent shouts, as became his new character as a "stanch loyalist released from rebel rule."

Mrs. M'Donald at once descended from an upper room, and as she approached the insolent speculator, he began to bow and smirk a half-mocking apology.

"I regret extremely, madam—but your servant was very insolent, and refused to inform you of my friendly visit—"

"Friendly visit, Mr. Cashmore?" interrupted Mrs. M'Donald, in cold disdain.

"As the case may be, madam," retorted he, keenly nettled by her unbending haughtiness. He had expected to find her in tears, subdued by the perils and privations of her position. It angered his grovelling nature to find that handsome dark eye as scornful and defiant as ever; that stately form erect and bold; the lips firm and resolute.

"I have come as a friend, and it depends upon you and your daughter whether I leave as an enemy," said he, swelling with a consciousness of his ability to annoy these ladies. "To begin, many of my friends, the Federal officers, are seeking quarters, and I have aided them some in finding comfortable places. Perhaps you have no objection to taking in a few?"

"No Federal officer or private, were he General Sherman himself, shall ever be sheltered in my house with my consent," replied the haughty matron. "We are wholly in their power, and they can use that power as gentlemen or as savages, as it may best please them; but it shall never be said that the widow of Hardeman M'Donald consented to open her doors to the despoilers of her land."

"Yes, I supposed that such were your sentiments—"

Southern women are a little stiff in that matter," sneered Cashmore.

"You are now a Federal, I suppose?" replied the lady, with cutting contempt.

"Always was, madam; though it was not good policy to say so until now," remarked Cashmore with a grin of unblushing effrontery, which would have laid bare the meanness of his soul, had Mrs. M'Donald not been fully aware of that already.

"But that only proves how able I am to befriend you, madam," he resumed, biting the head of his cane, and casting his frog-like eyes about in hope of seeing Miss Myrtis. "If I say the word, no Federals will be allowed to quarter here; and if I say the word, you will have riff-raff 'bummers' quartered here."

"You threaten; you a man, come here to threaten a widow! You are a noble character indeed, and worthy of the place of your birth—Massachusetts, sir. I am proud to know that you were not born within the limits of the Confederacy," replied Mrs. M'Donald undauntedly. "Still, I have a little pardonable curiosity to learn how your influence can shield me from the barbarity you mention."

"I have only to report you to headquarters, either as a 'loyal lady,' or a 'rebel woman.' The Federals know how to attend to both cases, madam."

"And to gain the precious good-will of Mr. Seth Cashmore, what is necessary, sir?"

"Ah, I thought you would understand all that. I have mentioned both to you and Miss Myrtis, a little matter—"

"One moment, sir," interrupted the indignant lady, stepping to the hall door and opening it wide, "as long as I am allowed to remain in this house, I intend to be its mistress. The street is best suited for you. Go, sir, and do your worst. Go!"

She stood aside and pointed toward the open door. He seemed both enraged and abashed, but walked out at once. He had heard that the Preston and Hampton blood was of high mettle, and that there had been instances where insulted Southern ladies had avenged their insults with a sudden stab or pistol-shot. Cowardly and treacherous, he was greatly alarmed, as he passed near those flashing eyes, and that pale, resolute face, nor breathed quite at ease until he stood upon the pavement.

"Very well," said he, as he hurried away, pale and trembling with rage, "I will be back very soon, and with the roughest set I can pick up. I'll show you what Seth Cashmore can do."

Myrtis M'Donald, standing upon the balcony above, heard these ominous words, and at once hastened to inform her mother.

"I know he is capable of any and every baseness," replied the matron, whose cheek was burning with indignation. "But as I told him to his teeth, let him do his worst."

"But, dear mother, he may return, with authority to drive us into the street," urged the young lady, whose prudence was greater than that of her mother.

"Then we will go into the street—we will live under sheds, and in shanties—as thousands of Southern families will be forced to live, before this war ends. Or, if God ordains, we will die in the streets before we will accept Seth Cashmore as one of our household."

"We can claim protection from the Federal General—"

"Myrtis M'Donald, from the enemies of my country I will claim no protection!" exclaimed the proud lady.

"We will not have the power to do so, unless we first secure protection against the malice of Seth Cashmore," quietly replied her daughter. "He will soon return."

"Well, what must we do? Shall I, or you, or both of us seek out the commanding officer and beg him for a guard? Never, never."

This conversation had passed in the hall, and neither lady noticed that there was a listener at the door, until old Myra, entering from the rear, whispered:

"Bress us! dar's a blue locus at de door!"

The ladies turned, and their eyes met those of a Federal officer, who stood, cap in hand, upon the threshold. His attitude and air were those of a well-bred gentleman; his features frank and manly, and as the ladies faced him he bowed respectfully and said:

"Pardon my intrusion, ladies. The door was open and

I came in. May I ask if this is the house of Mrs. Harde-
man M'Donald?"

"It was my house, sir," replied the widow, "yesterday.
I suppose it now belongs to you."

"To me, madam!"

"Why not, sir? All rebel property has been con-
fiscated by the abolition Government, so I suppose the
right of discovery makes it the legal possession of the first
abolitionist who finds it."

"Ah, but I am not an abolitionist," replied the officer,
in a laughing tone.

"Yet you wear the uniform of one."

"Pardon me for saying that I do not, madam. I wear
the uniform of the United States. I am a Unionist, but
not an abolitionist."

"There is no difference in the meaning of the words,
in my mind, sir," replied the widow, yet less haughtily
than before, for the handsome face and gentlemanly tone
of the unwelcome intruder impressed her favorably.

"My dear madam," said the officer, "we will not waste
time in discussing incendiary subjects. Several months
ago it was my fortune to capture a gallant young Con-
federate captain in Tennessee. His name, he said, was
Charles Pinckney M'Donald."

"My son! It was my poor boy, who is dead!" ex-
claimed Mrs. M'Donald in a sad tone, while she regarded
the speaker anxiously.

"Yes, madam, he is dead. He was badly, mortally wounded when he fell into our hands," continued the officer. "I had the honor of attending to his wants during the few days preceding his death, and at his dictation wrote a letter to his mother and sister—"

"You are the Captain Irving, of New York, of whom he speaks so earnestly in that letter—Captain William Dix Irving?" asked Mrs. M'Donald.

"I am, madam; now Major Irving, attached to the staff of General Slocum."

"Then, sir, permit his mother and sister to thank you fervently for the generous kindness you extended to poor Charlie," cried the widow, offering her hand to the officer.

"And may Heaven guard you from the sad fate which befell my dear brother!" exclaimed Myrtis, also giving her hand, while her beautiful and eloquent eyes filled with tears.

"Ladies," said Major Irving, as he pressed the fair hands, and gazed with much emotion from one to the other, "I did no more than any Christian soldier and gentleman should ever do to a helpless and wounded foe."

"Ah, but such instances of noble generosity are rare, Major Irving," said Mrs. M'Donald. "You were as kind to him as a brother; you sent to us his sword, his purse, and his watch—"

"Perhaps such deeds are not so rare as you imagine,

my dear madam," interrupted the Federal warmly. "I know there are many vile and barbarous characters, beastly natures, in our armies—the naturally evil nature of man is fearfully increased in wickedness by the license of war—yet, I know that the Federal army contains as kind, as noble, as chivalric natures, as generous hearts as any in the world. I know, too, that the Confederate army has many right noble natures, but are there not some as dark as any your people abhor in ours? But we will not argue upon that now. Man has been compared to an inferior god, and Holy Writ says that he is but little lower than the angels; yet my experience in this unhappy war has convinced me how readily man can become a beast, a savage, ruthless beast. I did not draw my sword to cut my Southern brother's throat because we differed in politics, nor to deprive him of any right bequeathed to him by the Constitution. I drew my sword to preserve the Union, which, from my childhood, I have been taught to revere and love as the palladium of American greatness and liberty. Evil-minded men have goaded the North and South into civil war, and the sword alone must now decide."

"The sword! But your generals wage more war with the torch than with the sword," said Miss M'Donald. "I have no doubt, Major Irving, that were all your officers like my wounded and dying brother's friend, the war would soon be ended by mutual concessions, founded upon high

patriotic principles; but your soldiers, and your radical Congress war against us, as if we were heathen, worthy only of extermination."

The young officer listened with great respect and deep admiration to the beautiful speaker, and, if he had any desire to continue the argument, he restrained it through a generous wish not to contradict so lovely a sufferer by the war. He had a fair and gentle sister yonder in New York, and he acted toward all Southern ladies as he wished his gray-coated enemies to act toward her, should the fate of war ever behold the great metropolis of the Hudson patrolled by Confederate troops.

"Miss M'Donald," said he, earnestly, while his bright, blue eyes proved his truth, "believe me when I say that the great Northern heart is sick of the horrors in which the war has involved the non-combatants of the unfortunate South. I know that we have a class of fanatics among us who entertain toward the South an animosity befitting only devils, and, unhappily for both North and South, that class is in power, and so long as it holds the power, oppression and outrage will rule in the field and in the cabinet. Let us hope for better days, when, with the Union restored, as our Revolutionary fathers made it and left it, both North and South will unite to cast out the great foe of American peace and prosperity—radicalism!"

"The North can never free herself from the grasp of the ruthless party to whose embrace she has submitted in

her desire to vanquish the South. But let us say no more of that," remarked Mrs. M'Donald. "You were the friend of my wounded and dying son, and in that name, not as a Federal officer, we welcome you to our poor home while yet it is ours."

"And yours, madam, I hope it will ever be, if you desire it," replied the Federal. "But I must convey to you the last words spoken to me by your dying son, in fact, the last he ever spoke, for the poor fellow died in my arms. It was just as the sun was rising that he spoke, after a silence of more than an hour. He had expressed a wish to behold the glorious sun rise once more, and as it appeared above the horizon, its first rays streaming in through the door of my tent, he pressed my hand, and I raised him to a half-sitting posture, with his head upon my shoulder, his face to the sun."

"God reward you, sir, for your kindness!" sobbed the mother, as her mind depicted the mournful scene, and as the pale and dying face of her beloved son rose before her.

"Dear Charlie! poor brother!" whispered Myrtis, as she buried her face in her mother's bosom.

The young officer, his own generous eyes paying tribute to his sympathy for the weeping mother and sister, continued in a deep and tremulous tone:

"I had learned to love Charles M'Donald, and I felt as I felt when my own brother died in my arms before Richmond. Your son gazed upon the rising sun long and

steadily, and then, with his eyes still fixed upon it, he said : ' Irving, I have seen the rising sun once more, and it carries my heart back to the home of my father, where I used to see it rising over the hills of Cherokee. God bless the sun, and all it shines upon ! Now let me ask one last favor, my kind friend. Should the fate of war ever enable you to befriend my mother and sister, be as kind to them as you have been to me, and God will bless you. Mother, sister, brother, friends, and land I love, farewell ; may God receive my spirit ! ' He never spoke again, but closed his eyes, sighed heavily, and as I gazed upon his pale, rigid features, I saw that he was dead. We gave him an honored soldier's burial, and raised a pile of stones to mark the spot where he sleeps, near the banks of the Cumberland. And now, my dear friends, if I may claim the honor to call you so, if there is any thing in the power of William Irving you desire, you have but to name it."

The emotion of grief, deeply excited in the hearts of the mother and sister by the simple narrative of the Federal officer, prevented them from replying. They were thinking of that beloved and dead one, wounded unto lingering death, and dying far from the gentle hands and idolizing eyes at home ; dying yonder in Tennessee, in the camps of his enemies, with the light of the rising sun glistening in his glazing eyes.

Ah ! he was happier far in dying in the arms of a generous and noble-hearted foe, than thousands upon thou-

sands of great-hearted sons of the South who breathed their last in the Federal prisons of Elmira, or Fort Delaware, or Camp Chase, or any other rival of Harper-defamed and Leslie-slandered Andersonville!

Happier, perhaps, than that giant mind and royal heart, which, as we write, beats and bruises high aspirations and noble thoughts against the prison bars of that political dungeon at Fortress Monroe. God grant him a speedy deliverance!

“Major Irving,” said Mrs. M'Donald, drying her tears, “I have shed so many tears since this dreadful war began, that I wonder my eyes have not dissolved in woe. My poor boy was very dear to me. I have but one son left to my widowed old age, and he rides with danger-loving and fierce-fighting Wade Hampton, my kinsman. I did not think that my tongue could ever speak kindly again to one wearing the uniform of the men who have slain my husband, and five of my sons, and who may yet hurl to a bloody and untimely grave, my last boy; but from the bottom of my heart I am grateful to you, and invite you to make use of our home, so long as it is spared to us.”

“Madam, I ask no reward, and claim no hospitality from you because I did a soldier's, and I trust, a Christian gentleman's duty to your son—”

“But, Major Irving,” interrupted Myrtis, “your presence as a guest in our house, will be a protection.”

“But we do not claim it in that light,” said Mrs.

M'Donald, quickly. "As the friend of my son, Major Irving is no longer to be considered in any other light than as an honored guest."

"Nevertheless," thought the less haughty Myrtis, "his presence will be a protection," and her beautiful eyes said as much, to the quietly observant major.

"I accept the generous offer, ladies," he said, after a moment's thought; "and though Mrs. M'Donald refuses to consider me except as a guest, I join with her in hoping that nothing may arise to deny me the right to be considered as a sincere friend."

"With that wish I heartily concur," replied Mrs. M'Donald. "We do not know how long we may remain in Atlanta; all is undecided with us. But so long as this house is ours, let it be yours, Major Irving."

"Thank you, madam. I will return within an hour, after performing a few duties belonging to my position."

With these words, the young officer bowed and withdrew, leaving Mrs. M'Donald with a far more favorable opinion of him than she had ever believed that the widow of Hardeman M'Donald could, under any circumstance, entertain toward a wearer of the Federal uniform.

"He has a noble heart," she said. "It is a pity that he wears that uniform."

"I do not think the color or cut of the uniform has much to do with the heart. A gentleman is a gentleman whether he wears the blue or gray," replied Myrtis.

Mrs. M'Donald fixed her dark eyes rather sternly upon her daughter's face, and said quite curtly :

“ Wait ; you have not seen all of General Sherman's army, yet.

CHAPTER IV.

A TITLED "BUMMER."

MEANTIME, Mr. Seth Cashmore, livid with rage—that devouring, flaming rage, which seethes in the soul of a coward just recovering from terror—pursued his way toward the centre of the city, muttering a thousand maledictions upon the pride and “pluck” of the M'Donalds, and casting his protuberant eyes here and there, in search of some means to appease his hungry malice.

He met several bands of Federals strolling about, but soon fixed his attention upon a party of four, whose uniform showed that they were officers, and whose loud talk and boisterous behavior proved that they had been assuaging their thirst with any thing but water.

“Good!” muttered the renegade speculator, as his glance fell upon the loudest talker of the four. “That is Tom Flaskill, who used to keep a cheap rum-shop in Cambridge Street in Boston. So he’s got to be a Federal captain. Wonder how he got his commission? But he’s the man I want. I’ll see if he knows me.”

With this determination the speculator accosted the party with a bow, and the words—

“’Day, gents. Looking for good quarters? Your servant, gentlemen, and loyal to the core.”

“You are? And who are you?” demanded the leader of the party, with an oath of the most profane style, at the same time fixing his eyes upon the grinning face of the speculator.

This quondam acquaintance and boon companion of Seth Cashmore, now sporting the uniform of a Federal captain, was a short, stout, red-faced, pock-marked fellow, with a pair of steel-gray eyes, over which drooped flabby and wrinkled lids, streaked with puffy veins, the same kind of veins variegating his thick, broad nose and swollen cheeks. A heavy red mustache, scraggy whiskers, and freckles innumerable, were the dubious ornaments of a face, every feature of which declared its owner to be a bully and a ruffian.

“My card, sir,” replied Seth, as his great, baggy fingers dived into his vest pocket, and produced a business card, upon which was written :

“ATLANTA, GA., *Sept. 2d*, 1864.

“This certifies that Mr. Seth Cashmore is a loyal citizen of the United States, and a warm friend to the Union cause.
—————.”

“Guess you know the signature attached, gentlemen,” continued Seth, in a tone of ironical humility.

"Seth Cashmore? Why I used to know you," cried the leader. "You used to keep a second-hand clothing store on Milk Street, down to Boston."

"Yes, I knew Tom Flaskill well in them times. Glad to see you are a captain, fighting the rebs. But what are you beating around after? quarters?"

"Yes. We are out on a seek, d'ye see, and want to get the best before some of the Moguls, the generals and colonels, spot 'em all," replied Captain Flaskill.

"Then I can show you as nice a house as is in town, and the best of it is, the old woman is a red-hot secesh from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot—so is her daughter—and swears through thick and thin that she'd sooner poison General Sherman himself than offer him shelter under her roof."

"I like to get my hand on them sort," growled Flaskill, rolling his cruel eyes around him. "Which way does she hang out?"

"Follow me, gentlemen, and I will soon lead you to the place," said the delighted speculator, as he paced off briskly, followed by the party. "I've been living several years in Atlanta, gentlemen, always a true friend to the noble Union—I'd die for my principles any day. But I never let the rebs suspect my true sentiments, you may be very sure. I had a narrow escape once, though. The time when our boys ran off with the engine on the State road. I gave our boys all the dots, and when they were caught

and brought back, I felt much afraid lest I might be found out."

"The rebs hung our boys, didn't they?"

"Yes, and I called it murder then, and I call it murder now, gentlemen," cried Seth, smiting his bear-like paws together in an ecstasy of patriotism.

"How was it the rebs didn't get you into their army?" asked Flaskill. "What with Jeff. Davis at Richmond, and old Joe Brown in Georgia, I wonder they didn't make an involuntary grayback of you."

"I dodged 'em in every way imaginable," replied Seth Cashmore, halting to produce a large pocket-book, and grinning hideously as he displayed his papers. "Here's my certificate to prove that I am fifty-nine years old. Here's one to show that I have the asthma; this one for the dropsy; this, that I cannot distinguish colors; this, that I am as blind as a bat in gas-light; this, that I am ruptured; this, that I have fits; this, that I have a disease of the spine; this, that I am a 'Dunkard,' and have paid five hundred dollars for being a 'Dunkard'—in fact, I have certificates to prove that I slept in a hospital, and caught all the diseases of every ward."

"Ho! you are a shy bird, Cashmore," said Flaskill, laughing, as the speculator grinned over his medical and exempting certificates.

"Of course I am," roared Seth, producing another batch of documents. "Here's evidence that I am an

agent of the Nitre Bureau ; here's my contract to supply charcoal ; here's another, which exempts me as tax assessor ; here's one that lets me off as a mail contractor ; here's another that exempts me as a railroad agent ; and here," cried the jubilant speculator, with a loud roar of triumphant fraud, "is my exemption as a preacher !"

"A preacher ? Can you preach ?"

"My dear friend," replied the speculator, smacking his thick lips, as if knavery tasted sweet to him, "I can do any thing to keep out of the war, and I feel pride in saying that I think I have done all that one man could do, conscientiously, to keep from shooting at the noble defenders of the glorious flag of the Union."

"I think you have, Cashmore, and no doubt you are now ready to carry a musket against the rebels ?" said Flaskill.

"If I am, may I be shot !" exclaimed Seth, very truthfully. "My genius does not lie in that line. But here we are, before the house I mentioned."

"Wait," said Flaskill. "I see that very nice young man, Major Irving, ahead. There, he is out of sight now. He's one of your cambric-handkerchief fellows, that thinks a reb's got rights. This is the house, is it ?"

"This is the place," replied Seth, waving his hand toward the open door. "Large and airy rooms—one or two quite well furnished, considering the times, though the owner—you see her standing in the door, gentlemen—has nearly

stripped her house of furniture to aid the rebel cause. Still, if the house pleases you, I can point out several rebel families which have some decent furniture left, and I guess you can help yourselves to what suits you."

"I think we can," replied Flaskill, with a brutal laugh, which attracted the attention of Mrs. M'Donald, who saw the party for the first time as he laughed.

"Heaven aid me now!" thought the widow, as she scanned the coarse and scowling faces looking across the street. "They are coming here, and Seth Cashmore with them. Well, I may as well meet them now as hereafter."

It was a sad sight to see that delicately reared Southern matron nerve herself to meet those brutal and triumphant foes of her beloved, prostrate land. The excitement of the hour had painted a bright-red spot upon each pale cheek of her still handsome face, and though her slender and feeble frame trembled from overtaxed nervousness, her dark, clear eyes flashed heroic defiance upon the shoulder-strapped "bummers" as they swaggered across the street, and noisily ascended the steps leading to the vestibule of her house.

They were ignorant of the respect due to woman's garb; or, if they were not ignorant, they had no shame, and red-faced Flaskill spoke out in a rude, overbearing tone:

"We want this house, old woman. We are four Federal officers, and want quarters here."

At this moment, Myrtis M'Donald hastened from her

room, and placed herself by the side of the widow, with an air of dignity and courage equal to the heroism of her high-spirited mother.

"You claim to be gentlemen, I presume?" said Mrs. M'Donald, but not moving from her door.

"We are Federal officers," replied Captain Flaskill, with a fierce oath, and looking very savage.

"Your uniform tells me that," calmly remarked Mrs. M'Donald. "B. F. Butler is also a Federal officer, and of far higher rank than you; yet I should be sorry if you admit him to be a specimen of a Federal gentleman. You desire quarters in my house. I suppose you have orders to that effect from your commanding officer? If not, I must decline the honor of your company."

"Just so," growled Flaskill, as he deliberately stretched out his great hairy hands; no doubt intending to thrust the ladies aside.

To avoid this insulting advance they were forced to fall back from the door, and Flaskill swaggered in with a coarse laugh, followed by his comrades, Seth Cashmore bravely bringing up the rear, and quite eager to make himself of importance to his Federal friends.

"The parlor is on the right, gentlemen," said Seth, staring atrociously at Myrtis, a vulgar, exultant stare.

"There ain't much left in this parlor," remarked the valiant Flaskill, as he rolled his eyes about the apartment. "Hardly pay a fellow for the carting off."

Now we must say that Tom Flaskill is an excellent type of a numerous class of titled "bummers," who afterward sullied the glory of Sherman's celebrated march; in fact, sullied it from the very day the Federal army entered Northern Georgia. We do not hold him and his fellows up as types of Federal officers in general; for, we feel a thrill of pride in the American name, in knowing that there were thousands of noble hearts beating beneath the Federal uniform; kind and generous souls, of a high sense of honor and chivalry, warring against the South because they firmly believed the Union cause just and true. But we present Tom Flaskill as a genuine specimen of those "jail-birds," holding Federal commissions, and using them to plunder, to burn, to destroy private property, and to insult, to harry, to outrage helpless old men, feeble and unprotected women, and innocent children.

Captain Tom Flaskill was an expert judge of what was worth "carting off" from Southern homes. It is not probable that he had ever entered a respectable parlor, in all his life, until, as a plundering Federal captain, he blundered into a commission and used his place and power to plunder "rebel property."

But he had a very extensive experience of what might be found in Southern parlors, bed-rooms, closets, and kitchens, for he had shipped on his own account, and upon shares with officers of higher grade and like character, several car-loads of "rebel" pianos, sofas, divans, otto-

mans, *têtes-à-têtes*, tables, carpets, curtains, pictures, mantel ornaments, etc., etc.,—shipped them North, where they may be found, indignantly says the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, to this day.

He was also an excellent judge of ladies' wearing apparel, and knick-knacks, trinkets, et cetera, in general ; for he had shipped North scores of trunks crammed with his tasteful selections from the plundered wardrobes of "rebel women"—not omitting babies' rattles, provided the rattles had a touch of gold on them.

Therefore Captain Flaskill felt indignant as he scornfully scanned the impoverished parlor of the M'Donalds, and had the right of an accomplished brigand, an A. M. of the College of "Bummers," to growl :

"There ain't much here worth the carting off."

"Not much now, that's a shameful fact," said Mr. Seth Cashmore, virtuously indignant that his esteemed friend Flaskill was thus deprived of his stealing privileges. "But this room used to be a grand flare-out. Rich Brussels carpets—"

"Where's them carpets now ?" demanded Flaskill.

"Made up into blankets and comforters for the rebels, Tom. Splendid marbled-topped side and centre tables—"

"Where's them tables now ?"

"Melted into Confederate money, sold to aid the rebel currency, Tom. Superb rosewood piano—"

"What's become of that ?"

"Sold to buy corn and salt for rebel soldiers' families, Tom. Costly curtains—well, it all went. I needn't waste time telling it. All went to help the rebels. You see what is left in this room; a chair or two, that picture—"

"Hello! what made that smashing hole just over the picture? and, come to look around, the walls is badly cut up," said Flaskill.

"One of the Federal shells burst in this room," replied Seth, rubbing his whiskers. "That picture is a portrait of the late Colonel Hardeman M'Donald, killed at the first Manassas. There used to be a great many very fine paintings in here, and in the hall, but they were sold to help to raise a fund to build a rebel gunboat."

"Old reb," said Flaskill, addressing the portrait," you might just as well cave."

He advanced to the picture and grimaced mockingly at the noble face. Had the fiery-spirited original, and not the lifeless portrait, been before him, he would have played hound and not hyena.

He grasped the frame, and, wrenching it from its brackets, would have tossed it through the open window into the street, had not Miss M'Donald placed her fair hand upon his ruffian arm and said:

"I pray you give that portrait to me, sir."

"And what do you want with it? Why didn't you sell it when you sold the others, you rebel!" demanded Flaskill, with an oath we omit, and we also omit the ob-

scene epithet which followed the word "rebel," though millions in the South can truly testify that the insulting epithet was lavishly used by the Federals in their march to the sea, when they addressed Southern ladies.

"It is the portrait of my father," replied Myrtis, her cheek flushing indignantly.

"It is the portrait of my dead husband, sir," remarked Mrs. M'Donald, with a calm dignity which should have abashed even B. F. Butler, who, in his late speech, glories in having forced "Southern ladies in silks and satins to *kneel* to him for favors!"

"It is de picture of my dead massa!" exclaimed old Myra, who had now joined the party.

"Good! I see that it is worth something to you," said Flaskill, with a wicked leer at the three women. "Hey, boys! here's a chance to drive a trade. I expect those rebels (we omit the epithet) have hid away a trinket or two, a watch or some rings. Say, old lady, what will you give for the picture of your husband? And you, my dainty, for the picture of your father? And you, you ball of blacking, for the picture of the old rebel rascal you still call your master? Going, going, going to the highest bidder. Gold, silver, greenbacks or trinkets taken at current rates! Make your bids, ladies, white and black!"

"What a humorous fellow he is!" said Seth, gloating maliciously over the humiliation of the unfortunate M'Donalds. "He'd make a superb auctioneer."

"Let him do as he pleases with it," remarked Mrs. M'Donald, haughtily, as she turned away in disgust. "It would grieve the noble spirit of Hardeman M'Donald to know that his widow and his daughter stooped to ask even life at the hands of a ruffian so base."

"Mother, mother," whispered the more prudent daughter, "do not irritate the ferocious beast, he may strike us. I am sure he looks vile enough."

But the valiant Flaskill seemed to be in a jocular mood, or, perhaps he had heard so many indignant feminine speeches as he insulted and plundered, that he had come to regard them as seasoning to his taste.

"There's game! That's plucky! The old hen will crow soon," said he, mockingly. "Come, I put the picture cheap. Three kisses from the young rebel maid ransoms old rebel head."

"Three all 'round," chorused his noble comrades, approvingly.

"With an extra one for me," snarled Mr. Seth Cashmore, in a paroxysm of delight. "Ah! I told you, ladies, you ought to make a friend of me."

"My daughter," said Mrs. M'Donald, "let us retire. These are so far from being entitled to the name of gentlemen, that it is a disgrace to humanity to call them men."

"Away it goes, then!" shouted Flaskill, as he tossed the picture into the street.

Though greatly shocked by the violence of these men,

the ladies hastened into the street to rescue the hallowed memento of their beloved dead, while old Myra loudly and stingingly berated the perpetrator of the cowardly deed.

But her indignant speech was suddenly cut short as Flaskill struck her in the mouth with the butt of his pistol, hurling her to the floor. What if she was a woman? "He never allowed rebels, black or white, to give him impudence!"

Had old Myra been the fairest, most stately dame in all Dixie, the ruffian would have struck her down all the same. He, and fellows like him, commissioned assassins, licensed thieves, with the scent of prisons and jails and dance-cellars reeking about them, never regarded age, sex, or color as they swept through the helpless South.

Does the reader suppose that the scene just narrated is a fictitious one? If so, fact is mistaken for fiction. It is but one of the many scenes of atrocious tyranny, outrageous barbarity which daily occurred in Georgia and South Carolina, when the Federal army followed the policy commanded by the radical party of the North. The scene we have attempted to portray is a tame affair, in comparison with what really transpired after Sherman's evacuation of the fallen city.

"I think this place will suit us, eh, boys?" said Flaskill. "Cashmore has promised to point out furniture."

"Of course I will, gentlemen," said the speculator,

“but you may find something worth your attention in the bed-room of these rebels.”

“That’s a fact; let’s have the whole house.”

“Massa cap’n,” said old Myra, rising from the floor, and wiping the blood from her lips upon her apron, “if you take de whole house, whar de ladies gwine for stay?”

“The ladies? They may leave—though that young one is a beauty, too,” replied Flaskill. “I’ll think of that.”

“Captain Flaskill,” said a voice. The ruffian turned round, and beheld Major Irving.

CHAPTER V.

INSULTING THE FLAG.

THE young major's face was blazing with indignation, and his blue eyes sparkled as he spoke those two words, "Captain Flaskill."

"Well, Major Irving?" replied Flaskill, facing him boldly.

"I understand from these ladies that they have been insulted by you, and that you are about to drive them into the street. That such is the fact I have no doubt, for I have overheard some of your language. Now, sir, understand this: this family is under my protection!"

"Under your protection! that's rich," said Flaskill. "But go on, I consider myself as good as any New York popinjay that ever walked."

"They are under my protection, sir, and I shall see that they are protected. You need not scowl at me, sir, nor any of your friends," continued the major, undisturbed by the black looks of the shoulder-strapped "bummers." "I hold an order from General Slocum assigning the house of Mrs. Hardeman M'Donald to my care!"

"Let me see the order," gruffly demanded Captain Flaskill.

The major gave him a paper, and the captain read it with a lowering eye. He returned the order, saying:

"You are ahead of me again, William Irving, as you were in Marietta; but mark me, I'll be even with you yet. You're a copperhead conservative, and that's more than half a rebel. Come, boys, Miss Nancy with the white kids is ahead of Tom Flaskill again. Let's find another spot, this place's been well picked already. Come, Cashmore, you can pilot us!"

"Cashmore? Is your name Cashmore?" asked Major Irving, advancing toward the speculator.

"At your service, major. Infinitely and entirely at your service, I assure you, and at that of all Federal gentlemen, everywhere," rattled Mr. Cashmore.

"I only wished to know you. I have heard of you," replied the major. "Captain Charles M'Donald, who died in Tennessee, knew you well. I wish to inform you that it is with great pleasure I decline the services you offer, and also that if you attempt again to annoy this family or any other unprotected family, I will break every bone in your body."

With these words, the major extended his nervous fingers with amazing celerity, and grasped the large hooked nose of the astonished speculator in a gripe of steel. Holding him thus he led him into the hall, through the hall to

the front door, released the nose and bestowed a hearty kick which enabled Mr. Seth Cashmore to take a prodigious leap into the street, where he arrived upon all fours.

"Pardon me, ladies," said the major, turning and bowing to the M'Donalds, "the fellow is scarcely worthy of a gentleman's boot, but he is so very mean."

Mrs. M'Donald smiled, while her daughter was forced to laugh aloud at the ridiculous plight of the speculator, who scrambled to his feet and hurried after Captain Flaskill and his comrades.

"I'll be revenged upon that fellow, if he is a Federal major," said Seth in his teeth, while he rubbed his back. "The M'Donalds are very lucky in finding a protector."

Very fortunate, indeed, Mr. Cashmore ; but alas ! how many in that unhappy and conquered city failed to find a Major Irving whose generous arm could and would shield their helplessness from lawless rascals like Seth Cashmore, who eagerly seized the time to gratify private malice which had rankled in venomous hearts for years ; or from the military brutality of wretches like Tom Flaskill, who followed and accompanied the mighty hosts of Sherman merely to plunder and to outrage !

Under the malevolent guidance of Seth Cashmore other "rebel homes" were visited and outraged by Flaskill and fellows like him ; but, for the time, the M'Donalds were safe from the attacks of the speculator, who, finding his aims thwarted, turned his attention to fleecing his Federal

friends with as little compunction as he had fleeced the "rebels."

The quiet but keen investigations of Major Irving soon discovered the bitterness of that poverty in which the M'Donalds had been steeped to the lips, and his private purse soon restored plenty, not only to that household, but to many others in the starving city. He was too thoroughly a gentleman to obtrude his charity upon any; particularly was he guarded in administering to the wants of the M'Donalds. He could appreciate the feelings of the haughty yet greatly humbled matron as she beheld in her house the uniform of her country's triumphant foes, and was rarely visible to either mother or daughter, though the beauty of the latter had greatly impressed his heart and mind.

When not engaged in his official duties he occupied much of his time in searching for misery and alleviating its pangs.

He had a wide field for charity in war-smitten Atlanta; and, though he possessed a heavy purse, it would soon have been exhausted, had he not found similar spirits to his own among his brother officers. As heavily as the heel of Federal war has crushed the Southern heart, it would be unworthy of its world-renowned reputation for chivalric and knightly traits, did it not fairly admit that amid the armies which swept over the fields of Dixie, like hurricanes of devastation, there were many generous and hon-

orable men ; men whom no party hate or sectional malice could make forgetful of the laws of honor, of humanity, of Christianity, of gentle breeding.

History will declare that under the barbarous policy ordered by the radical leaders at Washington, preached from the sacred desk by fanatical Bible-twisters, the Federal armies in paying strict obedience must have retrograded into the warfare of ruthless savages. "If," said the merciless abolition leaders, as they urged on the war, "the South cannot be subdued without extermination—and we believe it cannot—then exterminate her people!" The atrocious fact is on record in the archives of the American nation, and defies denial. But while posterity stands appalled before this evidence of party madness, let it rejoice that characters like Major Irving were not few nor far between.

There was barbarity enough, outrage, atrocity, inhumanity, savagery enough to sully the fair fame of the American name ; but civilization, chivalry, and Christianity shed their fair lights upon the night of horrors. Those leaders, civil and military, who played the parts of devils are already experiencing the condemnation of the world ; and, let us hope, that the time is not far distant, when those brazen-browed glorifiers in their own infamous deeds, who still trumpet forth their shame as a thing of which to be proud, will hasten to hide their crushed heads in the sands of oblivion.

The mortification of the proud-spirited Southern matron was concealed beneath a dignified calmness in perfect consonance with her lofty nature. She had great and bitter cause to hate the Federal name and flag, for men warring under the name of the Union, had bereft her of her husband, five of her sons, and all of her once opulent estate. She firmly believed the cause of the South most just; the course of the Washington Government most tyrannical.

Grateful, indeed, she was to Major Irving for his kindness, and for his sake she strove to look upon his uniform with some sentiment less harsh than detestation. She had once revered the "gorgeous flag of the Republic," but that feeling had passed away forever. She could not gaze upon it without remembering the graves of her husband and children, but she kept her sentiments locked within her own bosom.

The beautiful Myrtis shared all the feelings of her mother, but calm and prudent, she, too, held her own counsel.

But the feelings of both mother and daughter were to be rudely outraged during the few days they were permitted to remain in Atlanta, under Federal rule.

One day, the third or fourth after the discomfiture of Seth Cashmore, Mrs. M'Donald received an urgent note from a lady friend asking her immediate presence, as the mother of that friend was at the point of death.

As much as Mrs. M'Donald disliked to appear in the

streets, she could not refuse to comply with this request ; and as Miss M'Donald was also greatly attached to the dying lady, she of course accompanied her mother.

But the ever-vigilant eye of Mr. Seth Cashmore did not fail to recognize the forms, though he could not see the deeply-veiled faces of the M'Donalds. Malice, like love, is ever on the alert, and its instincts are almost unerring.

Though at a great distance, when he discerned two female forms in that deep mourning so common, alas ! North and South, since 1861, Seth Cashmore instantly conceived the belief that the objects of his malice were upon the street, and prompted into immediate activity by that belief, he made a rapid circuit of several squares, and was thus enabled to meet them.

They saw him, and recognized him, though neither spoke of the fact until he had reached a considerable distance from them.

"I did hope that we could pass through the streets without seeing that wretch," observed Mrs. M'Donald. "Now, it is a shame, after all the care we took to walk in deserted streets, that the very fellow whom we desired to avoid, should meet us, face to face."

"Hardly face to face, mother," replied Myrtis, "for we are so deeply veiled that he could not have recognized us."

"My dear child, remember that the war has left us but the dresses we now wear, and surely they must have become familiar to Seth Cashmore."

“That is true, mother. But what can he do to annoy us? We are not committing an act of treason, I hope, in merely appearing in the street?”

“Heaven knows what act our enemies may construe to be treason,” replied the widow. “I am sure we have no ‘rebel ribbons’ or ‘rebel ornaments’ upon our persons. I have heard that a little baby was arrested for wearing red and white stockings. Poor little baby rebel!”

Conversing thus, the ladies pursued their walk and soon reached the humble roof which sheltered their dying friend, Mrs. M'Donald remarking with a sigh, as they paused before the door—

“My spirits feel greatly depressed, and I attribute it to having met Seth Cashmore—I feel that he is plotting mischief of some kind.”

Mr. Seth Cashmore had been plotting mischief. He was an expert at plotting mischief, and he soon hit upon a plan by which he hoped to annoy, if not injure, the M'Donalds. He had seen their acknowledged protector, Major Irving, ride out that morning with several other officers, and felt quite confident that he had a fair field for his operations.

He hurried to find his friend Tom Flaskill, and having found that noble warrior about two-thirds drunk, and therefore in fine trim for any rascality, he at once laid his valorous plans before him.

“It shall be done!” replied the noble son of Mars,

buckling on his sword, and examining his pistols as if about to attack lions and not unprotected ladies. "They are proud upstarts, pets of Miss Major Nancy, and I rejoice in the opportunity."

He then collected several of his favorite companions, heroes of the bottle and bar-room stamp, and having procured two large Federal flags, and two stout cords, set forth upon his gallant expedition, piloted by the worthy Seth Cashmore.

Upon reaching the vicinity of the house of the dying lady, the doughty captain stretched a cord across the pavement, some ten or fifteen feet from the ground, and upon that he hung one of his "star-spangled banners." Then proceeding beyond the house, he rigged up his other flag.

"Now then," said Captain Flaskill, "I think they are in a trap. They must either pass under and touch the 'stars and stripes,' or put for the middle of the street, which will be an 'insult to the flag,' and we are ordered to arrest any one that treats the 'sacred gridiron' with the least disrespect."

"If I know any thing of the character of the old lady," chuckled Seth, as he rubbed his hands, "she'd drink poison before she'll pass under the Federal flag. I've heard her say so twenty times—and the young one too.

"Just so," replied Flaskill, "and now we'd better retire out of sight. For if they suspect the trick, they may make a virtue of a necessity."

They then withdrew to the corner of the next street, and waited patiently for the appearance of the ladies.

The McDonalds, busy in administering to the wants of the dying woman within the house, knew nothing of the hanging of the flags, nor was the fact observed by any of the afflicted household, for the attention of all was fully occupied within.

A fair and lovely spirit was rapidly passing away; not prostrated by the assaults of disease, but stricken down a few weeks ago by a Federal shell, as she stood by the bedside of her wounded husband.

Yes, on the 20th of August, 1864, while Mrs. Ray was bathing the burning brow of her husband, one of the militia of Georgia, wounded in the trenches before Atlanta, a shell flew screeching from the mouth of a Federal cannon, and hurling like a death-demon into the city, exploded in the sick-room, fearfully mangling the tender form of this excellent woman. The same explosion killed the wounded husband.

Scenes of horror, of woe, of misery indescribable were common at that time in the unhappy city. We present it but as a single specimen of the warfare beneath which Atlanta at length fell, crushed, bleeding, mutilated.

We will not linger at this death-bed of a gentle, delicate lady. She died, one of the many unoffending victims of that dreadful civil war, precipitated upon a peaceful and most prosperous nation by political fanaticism.

The M'Donalds performed the few kind offices that lay in their power, and with hearts saddened by the scene, left the house to return to their home.

They had reached the pavement, had turned to the right, had taken a few steps homeward, when both paused abruptly. There before them, hanging so low that to pass under it they must stoop, drooped the flag of the invaders of the South.

Mrs. M'Donald gazed upon the banner for a moment in silence, and then remarked—

“I have said that I will never pass under the flag of my enemies if I can avoid it. Come, we will go the other way.”

They turned, and an exclamation of surprise rose to their lips as they saw the second flag, flaunting as if in mockery of their dilemma.

“I told you Seth Cashmore was plotting mischief or insult,” said Mrs. M'Donald, “but his cowardly trick shall not force me to stoop to pass under that flag.”

“Mother,” remarked Myrtis, detaining the widow as she was about to walk into the street, “I have heard that the Federals bitterly resent any supposed slight to their flag. They may arrest us if we pass around.”

“Let them arrest, then,” replied the widow. “Such petty tyranny is in perfect accordance with their diminutive souls,” and with these words she walked into the street and passed around the nearer flag. Her daughter, of course, accompanied her.

"There, they have run their heads into the noose," said Flaskill to his comrades, who had held keen watch. "Some of you can go and take down the flags, while I proceed to arrest these rebels. Come, Cashmore."

"Excuse me, Tom, I'd rather not appear in the affair," protested the wary speculator, who had a vivid and salutary remembrance of the threat of Major Irving. "I will see you again, and hear all about it."

He did not remain to argue the matter, but hurried away, while the valorous Flaskill hastened after the ladies, followed by several of his soldiers.

The M'Donalds were soon overtaken, and coarsely ordered to halt by Captain Flaskill.

They at once halted, and awaited his pleasure. Both instantly recognized that brutal face, and those cruel eyes glaring malignantly beneath their flabby, red-veined lids.

"Why did you rebel women not pass under our flag, just now?" demanded Flaskill, while his soldiers gathered around the shrinking ladies with fixed bayonets.

"Were those flags not hung there to compel us to pass under them, sir?" asked Mrs. M'Donald, calmly.

"That does not answer my question, you rebel," said valiant Flaskill, fiercely, as he twirled his red and bristling mustache. "You left the pavement, walked into the street, and passed around the American flag; thus publicly declaring your contempt for the flag of the Union. Do you deny it?"

"I do not deny it," promptly replied Mrs. M'Donald.

"Then I arrest both of you for treason," cried Flaskill. "March the rebel wenches to the guard-house. Fall in! Forward!"

Then was seen a spectacle by no means uncommon during the war, and afterward seen in other Southern cities; the spectacle of delicate Southern ladies marched through the most public streets, guarded by stalwart, bearded men in blue, whose fierce looks and glistening bayonets betokened to all beholders the importance of their petticoated prisoners, and the terrible danger to the Federal arms, should those dreadful "rebel women" get loose!

The M'Donalds at first almost sank with shame, but a few moments sufficed to restore to them their family and national courage.

"It is no shame that we, though women, should be insulted for our country's sake," remarked the haughty widow, as her dark eyes flashed defiance, and as she boldly threw aside her veil. "My husband and children have died for the Southern Confederacy, and if my death is demanded I am ready."

The maiden modesty of the lovely girl at her side, less experienced in the rude ways of the world, shrank however from the bold and leering eyes of her captors, and she clutched her veil beneath her chin with trembling hands, as if fearful that rude and shameless Flaskill would pluck it from her blushing face.

"Conduct me to your provost-marshal at once," demanded Mrs. M'Donald.

"I'll slap you into the guard-house first, and then make my report," replied Flaskill, who took huge delight in humiliating "rebel wenches."

He kept his word. These ladies were marched to the guard-house, and locked up in company with drunken soldiers, thieving vagabonds, negro ruffians, and the like.

It was nearly night, when even the heroic fortitude of the courageous though feeble widow, was nearly exhausted before Major Irving entered the dirty room in which the M'Donalds were confined.

His face was grave and pale, and there was a fresh scar upon his cheek, as from a recent encounter.

"Come with me, ladies," said he, offering an arm to each, and conducting them to a carriage in the street. "I am deeply mortified that my absence gave an opportunity for the perpetration of this outrage. At least, neither Captain Flaskill nor Seth Cashmore will annoy you for some time to come."

He then explained that information of the affair had been reported to him by old Myra, upon his return from a reconnoissance, and that he had immediately procured an order for their release, and, having met Flaskill and Cashmore on his way to the guard-house, had pummelled the captain and cowhided the speculator.

CHAPTER VI.

ATLANTA DEPOPULATED.

A FEW days after the events narrated in the preceding chapter appeared the celebrated order of General Sherman, which commanded the depopulation of the conquered city.

We will not pause here to discuss this remarkable order, by which thousands of the women and children of a vanquished town were deprived of their homes, and turned shelterless, penniless, but, thank Heaven, not friendless, upon the precarious livelihood to be gained or begged in an impoverished country. We will only say that the enforcement of the order caused incalculable misery, including sickness, diseases of all kinds, bitter poverty, starvation, death.

The unfortunate refugees of the hapless city were scattered over all the State ; families were broken up, never to be reunited ; property was lost, or ruined, beyond all redemption ; decrepit old men, sick women, and hungry children, driven from their shell-shattered Atlanta homes,

straggled over all Georgia, living from hand to mouth, or dying by the wayside, glad to shelter their heads and tottering frames in sheds, shanties, mere kennels, old stables, dismantled cars, shattered wagons, ruined and long-deserted negro cabins, crumbling old stores—nay, even in empty hogsheads, in and under any thing which afforded the slightest shelter.

Gaunt starvation, livid-lipped, haggard-eyed disease followed these miserable refugees; and had not the generous charity of the poverty-smitten South hastened to aid and shelter them, probably not one in ten would have lived until 1865.

But Macon, Augusta, Columbus, Savannah, and other Southern cities, and the towns, villages, and hamlets of the noble Empire State, never forgetful of the pure instincts of Christianity, gathered them up as far as they were able, though there were many proud-hearted unfortunates who suffered and concealed the pangs forced upon them by the order which depopulated Atlanta.

The M'Donalds were forced to seek some other home, and they departed from the last home of their ancestors, unable to take with them the few comforts and little furniture they had barely held together until that sad hour.

With a tenacious fidelity old Myra clung to the waning fortunes of her unhappy mistress. Bleak, black, and bitter had those fortunes been; but the future loomed up darkly, still more bleak and black, and bitter, yet this

aged negress, type of many of her race, refused to be separated from the fate of that family in which she had lived and served since her birth.

The kindness of the Federal major was still bright and conspicuous, nor was this nobleness of character caused by his love for Myrtis M'Donald. Prior to the war he had wooed and won the heart of a fair-haired Northern lady ; and though he could not but admire the loveliness of the dark-eyed, graceful Georgian girl, his soul remained true to his Northern love. His kindness sprang from his own chivalric nature, and he was as noble in his conduct toward the ruder classes of his helpless foes as he had been toward the refined and once-opulent M'Donalds.

All the more honor to him for this, for the license of the times was simply fearful, and the examples as well as the precepts of the leaders of the radical party commanded their soldiers to oppress and destroy.

He had become greatly interested in the fortunes of the mother and daughter, and on one occasion advised them to seek refuge in New York, beneath his mother's roof, and assured them of a warm welcome.

"My mother and sister," said he, "already know you, for I have written much concerning you. Reside with them until the return of peace will enable you to live in peace again in Georgia. I am in profound earnest, ladies."

"I have no doubt you are, Major Irving," replied Mrs. M'Donald, deeply affected by this unexpected generosity

from one wearing Federal uniform, "and we are inexpressibly grateful to you for your princely kindness. With warm and ever-mindful gratitude to you, we must decline to accept your offer. Our fortune must attend that of our beloved South; with her we are willing to suffer, with her we live or die, as the All-wise God ordains."

Major Irving was fully capable of appreciating this pure and lofty patriotism, and he bowed his admiration, while he expressed his regret that the war had shattered that deep love which both North and South had once been emulous in displaying for the great American Union.

"It is no longer a Union," replied Mrs. M'Donald, "it is a despotism," and with these words the conversation ended.

The services of the major procured the M'Donalds means of transportation to the Confederate lines, and, with sincere regret upon both sides, they parted.

"Did I not devotedly love Frank Bartow, I should be tempted to love Major Irving," thought Myrtis M'Donald, as she gazed after the tall and graceful officer as he disappeared amid a crowd of blue uniforms.

The widow had her thoughts, also, and a tear trembled in her eye as she saw her Federal protector no more; but she said nothing, and other and more imperative thoughts came into her mind at the moment, chief and most important of which framed themselves thus: "Great God! where shall we go?"

Gazing sadly around upon her fellow-unfortunates, her eye seemed to read in the woe depicted upon every pale and anxious face, those same terribly significant words: "Great God! where shall we go?"

"God will provide. He always has," mused the pious and confiding lady. "Thus far, through sorrow, want, and woe, His hand has sustained me. The will of God be done."

Myrtis M'Donald was still more self-reliant. Unlike her feeble mother, she was in robust health, and health always gives courage. The war had taught her fair fingers to toil, and no sentiment of false pride existed within her well-balanced mind to restrain her hands from "earning her bread in the sweat of her face."

Let us here pause to pay a passing tribute of profound admiration to this noble trait in the character of the women of the South. Although the calamities of war, relentless devastation, ruthless spoliation, and the unsparing torch hurled thousands from comparative ease into the jaws of poverty, struck down hundreds from affluence to sudden pauperism, but few failed to struggle successfully, hand to hand, with grim want; and, though toiling far more laboriously than they had ever asked their servants to toil, ever shining and resplendent as ladies, as noble, patriotic, all-enduring, were the unconquered women of the South. When unassailed by the diseases ever attendant upon suddenly changed life and condition, they fought with their

needles, their looms, their spinning-wheels, ay, with the hoe and the plough, as defiantly, as heroically as their bearded husbands, sons, and kinsmen in the field of battle. They willingly gave their all to the cause of their country. Their relations, their homes, their servants, their jewels, their comforts, their luxuries, they withheld nothing save their honor, and thus has the glory of the maids and matrons of the South emerged from the din and shock and ruin of those four years of terrible war, undimmed, fresh, and sparkling, the immortal admiration of the world.

As we have mentioned elsewhere, the women of the South, near the close of the struggle, when they had no more to give, were forming associations to sell their beautiful locks to the barbers of France, that the sinking treasury of the land they loved might be sustained.

The history-famed patriotism of ancient Greece, Rome, and Carthage did not surpass that of the women of the South.

After a tedious and sorrowful journey of many weary hours, the M'Donalds found themselves within the Confederate lines, once more beneath the ill-starred banner which still floated defiantly in the fierce grasp of Hood and Hardee.

Among the first to greet them, and to attend to their immediate necessities, as well as to those of other unfortunate refugees, was General Hood himself, who had known the late Colonel Hardeman M'Donald. He was upon the

eve of that northern march which resulted so fatally in Tennessee, months afterward, and therefore could devote but little time to any particular person ; but through his kindness the ladies experienced many comforts which they would not otherwise have received.

“Where shall we go, Myrtis?” asked Mrs. M'Donald, as they gazed in bewilderment about them upon the crowd of refugees and soldiers.

“Yonder comes one who may aid us,” exclaimed the young lady in a joyful tone, and pointing toward a troop of cavalry.

Looking quickly in that direction, Mrs. M'Donald beheld Captain Frank Bartow galloping toward them.

“Ah! I expected you would come,” said the young officer, as he halted his horse near them, and sprang to the ground. “Indeed, I knew Sherman's magnanimous order would force you to hurry from Atlanta. And now where are you going?” he continued, after exchanging a hearty salutation with each.

Captain Frank Bartow had improved greatly in appearance since we saw him pale and feeble upon that sorry horse in Atlanta. His eye was brighter, his complexion fresher, and his step quick and firm.

“Where are we going?” repeated Mrs. M'Donald, mournfully. “Indeed, that is the question which drives us nearly crazy, Frank. Here we are, safe out of Federal hands, and you see what we have been able to bring with

us—two bundles ; and old Myra carries her dear master's picture—”

“Intend to freeze to it twill the war is ober,” replied Myra, enthusiastically, “an’ den hang him up in de parlor again, please God !”

“I thought you would be at a loss where to go,” continued Captain Bartow, “and have been speaking to a relative of mine who resides near Oxford, in Newton County. He is here, somewhere ; I will hunt him up presently. He is a member of the relief committee from that county—”

“But, Captain Bartow,” exclaimed Myrtis, “you cannot expect that we can consent to become a burden to your relative—”

“My dear young lady, please do not say a word,” interrupted Captain Bartow. “I have a kind of right to take care of you—but here comes my cousin, Mr. Alexander.”

“I know him very well,” said Mrs. M'Donald, as she extended her hand to an aged, white-haired gentleman who joined them.

He had been a noble-looking man in his prime, and, although nearly seventy winters had frosted his thin locks until they were as white as snow, and feeble health had greatly impaired his once-powerful frame, he was still an imposing-looking gentleman, despite the stoop in his shoulders, the crutch stick in his hand, and the well-worn

suit of brown jeans. His clear blue eye was still bright and beaming, and a genial smile was engraved around his handsomely-cut lips.

"I have heard all about you, Mrs. M'Donald," said the old gentleman, heartily, in a tone which showed that his age had not touched a deep and prepossessing voice. "Frank and I have arranged the whole matter. You and Miss Myrtis, who, I see, has continued to increase in beauty, are to go with me to my place near Oxford. You can remain as long as you like—I hope until the war is over. My wife will be happy to welcome you to all that we have left—and that is enough to live on for a time. Sherman, I think, will have to look to his rear, and I hope he will soon be tossed out of Atlanta."

The old man, always remarkable for his happy disposition, was as hopeful as ever, and it was soon resolved that the M'Donalds should accompany him to Newton County.

"As for me," said Captain Bartow, "I go with General Hood, hoping to fall in with my old leader, General Wheeler."

Parting was again hasty, but before the young officer rode away, he said to his friends :

"Yonder comes some one whom you have never seen, and yet he is a very important personage in our hard-pressed Confederacy, and is to review the army to-morrow."

Looking in the direction Captain Bartow indicated, the ladies saw a party of horsemen riding a few paces from them, but, knowing all of them except one, they fixed their eyes upon that one.

The stranger was a tall, thin gentleman, with a very military posture in his saddle, a look of extraordinary resolution deeply engraved upon his attenuated features.

"It is our President! It is noble Jefferson Davis!" burst from the lips of Myrtis M'Donald, who, in common with all patriotic women of the South, held the distinguished chieftain of the Confederacy in profound love and reverence.

"Yes, it is President Davis, who has more weight, more responsibility upon his shoulders than any other leader in Christendom," said Captain Bartow, uncovering his head as the great statesman rode rapidly past. "If his countrymen gain their independence his name will rank second only to that of Washington; if his cause falls, as it appears it must, then Jefferson Davis will be branded as a rebel and a traitor, and, if captured, will be shut up in a dungeon, like a felon, loaded with chains, assailed with contumely—perhaps (may God forbid!) led to a scaffold."

"All the bayonets of the North can never thrust from my heart the love, the respect, the reverence I feel for the first choice of my country!" replied Mrs. M'Donald. "Whether he falls or rises, he will ever be dear to the hearts of all true Southerners."

"No doubt of that," remarked Mr. Alexander, quietly, "but the sins of the Southern people—their failures being considered sins by their enemies—will be visited upon the head of their chief. But, come; let's us hope that no such melancholy catastrophe awaits the Southern Confederacy. Cheer up! that's my motto. Come, ladies, we will have to take a long and circuitous wagon-ride—rough travelling, and a very sorry team, too, but the best that I can find. Do your talking at a double-quick, while I hunt up my team."

The old gentleman hurried away, and Captain Bartow received from the M'Donalds a hasty but succinct sketch of their trials in Atlanta, to all of which he listened eagerly.

"I hope I may have the fortune some day to meet Major Irving as a friend, and never sword in hand," remarked the generous Confederate. "He has gained my eternal gratitude for his kindness. Flaskill? I will remember his name. Mr. Seth Cashmore, I fear, will be very careful not to put his hooked nose outside of the Federal camp."

The return of Mr. Alexander soon broke off the conversation, and Captain Bartow again bade his friends farewell, only lingering to see them depart, hauled away in a wretched wagon, drawn by four miserable mules.

"Alas!" sighed the young officer, as he gazed after them, "where now is that magnificent carriage, and those

blooded horses, behind which the wealthy M'Donalds used to ride? No doubt some abolition dame flaunts to church in that same carriage upon holy Puritanic soil, and thanks God that she never owned negroes; and as for the horses, poor fellows, their bones are bleaching in Northern Georgia, no doubt."

Owing to the roughness of the roads, and inefficiency of their team, the M'Donalds did not reach the home of Mr. Alexander until the third day after parting with Captain Bartow.

"Here is my home," said Mr. Alexander, as they halted before an elegant mansion, but whose outward appearance bore that strange look of decay which had begun to fall upon the habitations of the Southerners. "I used to take pride, ladies, in the appearance of my home; every man should do so, but the fear that all my labor will be lost, as the abolitionists have passed a bill confiscating all rebel property, prevents me from doing more than merely patching up."

The old gentleman's tone was quite sad, and the ladies saw that his eyes were full of tears.

"Not only that, and that is bad enough—the thought that some base fellow may possess the fruits of my toil for more than half a century, or that the place may be burned down—bad enough, all that—but it is the reflection that I have no children now to inherit after me. But yonder comes my dear wife—very old, and feeble too, as you perceive by

her slow and painful approach. But she is all that is left to me now, and therefore very dear to me."

It was affecting to see the old gentleman hasten to meet the aged partner of all his joys and sorrows—all sorrows now, and to see him greet her, as affectionately as if they were still in the prime of rosy-lipped youth. Age, nor sorrow, had quenched the warm love which made their old hearts one, and hand in hand the pair hastened back to the wagon to welcome the refugees from Atlanta.

"Come into the house, ladies," said the old white-haired lady, as her husband assisted the M'Donalds from their uncomfortable quarters in the 'shackly wagon.' "I am very glad that you have come, for we are quite lonely now."

Myrtis noticed that the voice of the old lady was sadly tremulous as she used the word "now," and she returned her motherly caress warmly.

Glancing toward Mr. Alexander, she saw that he had hurried to a corner of the front yard, and was kneeling in prayer before the tombstones of three graves.

"They are the graves of our three sons," sighed Mrs. Alexander, as she brushed a tear from her cheek. "James, Henry, and Edward, all grew to manhood, and gave fair promise of useful lives. But James was killed in Virginia, Henry in Tennessee, and Edward before Atlanta. My husband never rested until he brought the bodies of our poor boys home, and buried them there in that corner; where,

when little curly-haired boys, they used to love to play—it was their favorite spot—God bless them! and every day their poor father goes there to pray for strength to bear up under his great affliction.”

Tears fell freely from the eyes of the M'Donalds as they listened to this affecting tale, and Mrs. M'Donald wept bitterly as the faces of her five slain sons arose in her memory.

“Bear up, my child,” said the aged hostess, pressing the hand of the widow, “God puts many crosses upon us, but He does it all for our good, all for our good, never doubt it. Perhaps our children—I have heard that you have lost several—are spared many trials in being taken from this world. God gave them to us, and we gave them to our country. I have a dear and lovely daughter, too, but she is in Virginia, trying to get through to Elmira, in New York, where we have heard her husband is a prisoner, sick and languishing.”

They found a quiet and comfortable refuge there, in the home of the hospitable old pair, and soon came to regard them as relatives, and not as strangers. They found employment, too, in spinning, weaving, and knitting for the ragged soldiers of their impoverished land, and so time stole on until the rumor came, in the latter part of November, 1864, that Sherman had evacuated Atlanta, and was plunging through Georgia, sword and torch in hand, marching with a devastating front sixty miles broad.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COMING TEMPEST

THE rumor, in its wildest form, was true. Sherman, with sword and torch, was plunging toward the sea, and hapless Atlanta was again crushed, mutilated, nearly annihilated, by those who had depopulated her, and were unable longer to hold her.

On the 12th of November the powerful right wing of that vast army moved from Atlanta, and began that terrible march through a helpless country. On the 14th, the left wing, no less powerful than the right, began its march.

On page 27 of General Sherman's official report, we read these simple words :

"In the mean time Captain O. M. Poe had thoroughly destroyed Atlanta, save its mere dwelling-houses and churches."

On page 76 the reader will find this remarkable statement from the pen of one of General Sherman's staff officers, as he writes of the abandoned city :

"The hand of Time, *with a higher degree of civilization*, can only efface the marks inflicted by a warlike occupation."

Had the Federal been exact in his language, and placed the word "only" before the words "the hand of Time," his meaning would be clearer ; or did he mean that "the

hand of Time," potent as it is, and aided by "a higher degree of civilization" than has ever blessed this barbarous South, can "only *efface* the marks inflicted" by the occupation of the Federal army, and never restore her former prosperity to the mutilated "Gate City?"

Or was this "thorough destruction" of Atlanta a proof of that "higher degree of civilization" so greatly lacking in our benighted land?

But Atlanta was "thoroughly destroyed," and many of those "mere dwelling-houses" were destroyed also. Many had been defaced, shattered, ruined by military occupation; many caught flames from the blazing public buildings, and added their smouldering embers to that vast mass of ruin and misery, the ashes of Southern homes.

The conqueror, in deserting his costly conquest, dealt the unfortunate city a parting blow, beneath which she reels and staggers to this day, and will probably reel and stagger for many years.

Mr. Seth Cashmore, who remained in the city up to the date of its evacuation by the Federals, wisely concluded that it would be dangerous for him to remain behind. He was greatly chagrined when he learned that his Federal friends were about to leave the city, and that his only safety lay in marching with them.

He felt quite anxious concerning the wisdom of the step, for he had sufficient sagacity to know that if a powerful army of Confederates should check Sherman's ad-

vance for a single week, the Federal general would be ruined. Nothing but luck, which makes nine-tenths of the greatness of many military leaders, could carry Sherman to the sea, and Mr. Cashmore was very uneasy.

Yet, as he had to go, and could not carry the last residence of the M'Donalds with him, he and his valiant friend, Captain Tom Flaskill, applied the torch to its deserted walls, as soon as Major Irving vacated the premises.

It was some satisfaction to the malicious soul of the speculator as he watched the flames consume the last possession of his escaped victims. It was by no means all that was craved by his "great maw of revenge," but it was something, a delicious morsel, a tidbit, very pleasant to roll under his tongue, and he smacked his thick lips, grinned widely, rubbed his great hands, and winked his toad-like eyes as he contemplated the burning mansion, on the night of the 13th of November, 1864.

The flames roared through the empty hall, leaped into the plundered parlors, sprang through the vacated rooms, licked the stripped walls, devoured the stairs, reached the roof, and then, uniting in one great pyramid of fire, rapidly reduced the noble mansion to ashes, leaving only the skeleton chimneys standing, gaunt, grim, and ghastly, to mark the spot where had been a Southern home.

There were flames in every part of the city, for Atlanta was being "thoroughly destroyed!" Noble stores, once the busy marts of commerce, splendid edifices, proud tro-

phies of the business world ; grand structures, in which the hardy mechanic had wrought in noble labor ; public buildings, the result of private and public pride and enterprise—all these went down, crumbling to ashes, dissolving in smoke, vanishing in vapor before Federal torches, blazing to restore the Union.

But Mr. Seth Cashmore enjoyed the lurid horrors of that scene far more keenly than any mere mercenary who brandished the torch because he was paid to destroy. Seth Cashmore had a score or more of private hates and personal dislikes to gratify, and the license of a military burning gave him ample field to exercise his privileges.

In after-days, when the refugees, driven from Atlanta by General Sherman's celebrated depopulating order, returned to seek their homes, too often for enumeration they saw heaps of blackening ashes, where their homes had been ; or often found merely a stable or a cow shed left.

Having glutted his appetite for burning, Mr. Seth Cashmore, who had learned where the M'Donalds had sought and found refuge, attached himself to the left wing of the Federal army. His boundless malice had suggested to him that his hate might still further be gratified ; the fortune of war might again place the persecuted family within his power. He suspected that the march was to be one of unsparing devastation, and he scented a huge spoil ahead, gold and silver plate, gold and silver watches, jewels, rings,

and breast-pins, hoards, "rebel hoards" of specie ; and he and Captain Flaskill drew dazzling pictures of the riches they were to snatch from terrified rebel men and women. Noble pastime ! Well suited to the taste and talent of Mr. Seth Cashmore, and spirits like his.

On page 79 of General Sherman's official report, penned by his staff officer, the reader will find these significant words :

"The order for RELENTLESS DEVASTATION of the country was strictly carried out."

Perhaps Mr. Seth Cashmore had seen the order here referred to, by the frank-spoken staff officer, and at once saw therein his commission as a "loyal man" to devastate to the best of his poor abilities. At all events, he resolved to do so, and therefore attached himself to the company of the valorous Captain Tom Flaskill, as a sutler, for he knew his shining abilities in that line, and judged that he could legitimately, in the way of trade, wrest much booty from that glorious company of "bummers."

The unfortunate M'Donalds who had fled from place to place, since their home in Northern Georgia had gone to add to the immense heaps of the ashes of Southern homes, were again thrown into alarm by the fearful rumors from Atlanta.

The refugees, with Mr. and Mrs. Alexander were seated at dinner on the 19th of November, when one of the negroes hurried into the room, with the information that a

large body of blue-coated cavalry was approaching the house.

"I think the woman is mistaken," said Mr. Alexander, as all hastily arose, and hurried to the piazza. "It may be a body of Confederate cavalry. I place no credit in these wild rumors. If Sherman has really evacuated Atlanta, he will aim for Macon."

Upon reaching the piazza, however, the old gentleman saw his error. Quite a large body of Federal horse appeared in sight, and galloped rapidly past the residence of Mr. Alexander, pushing on at great speed.

"Where can they be going, and after what?" thought the old man, as he gazed after the cavalry. "If they hold on in that direction, they will soon be in Walton County."

Not one of the Federals halted until the whole force had passed, and then Mr. Alexander was surprised to see the troop suddenly pause, while one officer rode back to the gate and dismounted.

"Mother," exclaimed Myrtis McDonald, "it is Major Irving!"

It was that generous officer; he had recognized the ladies as he galloped past, and, having halted his forces upon a rising ground, returned to speak a few words.

Both ladies hastened to meet him as he entered the yard, and he smiled with pleasure as he grasped their hands.

"I was sure it was you," said he, in his pleasant tone,

"and rode back to see. I am glad that I saw you, and yet very sorry^e that you are here."

"And why sorry, Major Irving?" asked Mrs. M'Donald.

The young officer replied gravely:

"Our army is on the march, Mrs. M'Donald, and a portion of the left wing, if not all of it, will pass through Newton County. The army is commanded to subsist upon the country as it marches, and to destroy all that it cannot consume, all that may be of the slightest use to the Confederate Government. Of course there will be much plundering of private property, for in so large an army as ours there must be some very bad men, men who will not hesitate to oppress the helpless. I hope, however, for the honor of the American name and the glory of the Union cause, no outrages will be committed which shall make the nation blush. Still, I advise you and your friends to conceal your more valuable articles, and I will do what I can to protect you, in leaving a guard for a day or two, by which time the danger may be over."

He turned to his command and beckoned to a subordinate, who immediately rode up to the gate to hear the commands of his chief.

"Lieutenant Giles," said the major, "I suppose you have no objection to doing a little guard duty. I select you because you are an officer and a gentleman, and appreciate the respect due to ladies. Please return to the

command and select any one of the men you prefer. Remain two days, or until the rear has passed, and then hasten to join me at Madison, if possible."

The lieutenant touched his cap and rode back to the troop, from which he soon returned with an intelligent and manly-looking trooper, who bowed respectfully as he saw the ladies.

"And now, ladies," said the noble-hearted major, "I have done all that I can do. Should we never meet again, I beg that you will bear me in kind remembrance."

"Indeed we will, Major Irving," exclaimed the ladies, as he galloped away.

"Ah, what a pity all our Federal foes are not like Major Irving!" said Myrtis M'Donald.

"All!" echoed her mother, bitterly too, as she remembered her dead and her homes in ashes. "Would to Heaven a moiety of them were like him! He is a Federal Bayard, and I pray he may pass safe through the war, to cheer the heart of his mother, who must, indeed, be proud of so noble a son."

Myrtis M'Donald had, with feminine ingenuity, gleaned from conversations with the Federal major, that there was another lady in the North who thought highly of him, and she mentally prayed that he might escape all dangers, and live to bless and be blessed by that fair-haired damsel.

The day passed off in quiet until near the hour of sunset, although several of the neighbors of Mr. Alexander had

dashed by the house, driving before them mules and cattle to hide them from the enemy.

Well-founded reports of the "relentless devastation of the country" were rife, and a general panic was upon the whole population, white and black.

Mr. Alexander, descended from a noble Revolutionary family, would have remained at his home to brave the storm, even though no Federal guard made it apparently secure. He had no stock to conceal, except the four miserable mules we have already mentioned. The war had long since swept away the numerous draught animals with which he used to cultivate his large plantation. His cattle were also few in number, for nearly all had gone to supply the wants of the soldiers, or of the soldiers' families. A generous and humane man, a type of the great-hearted, charitable planters of Georgia, he had given liberally and continually; perfectly content so that the independence of the South should be achieved, though he might be left penniless.

He had no idea of flying from the Federals, though the highly-colored and (alas! for the honor of the American name) too truthful reports of Federal barbarities might terrify the heart of a stronger and younger man than old silver-haired Jerome Alexander.

The great hostile host, numbering, some said, nearly one hundred thousand formidably armed men, no doubt over seventy thousand, had swung loose from "thoroughly

destroyed" Atlanta, and precipitated itself upon a country almost totally defenceless. No Confederate force of strength was between Sherman and the sea. Hood and his gallant army, at that time, were in Tennessee, pushing General Thomas back upon Nashville, and General Sherman had no opponents save a few thousand raw militia, aided by General Wheeler's small cavalry command.

But the Federal general, whether in pursuance of a determined policy of devastation, or prompted by a fear of imminent danger, moved and struck with the fierceness of a merciless victor. Columns of Federals, numbering thousands, swept like hurricanes of wrath and destruction through the defenceless counties of Fayette, De Kalb, Spaulding, Newton, Walton, Henry, Morgan, Jasper, Bibb, Putnam, Hancock, Baldwin, Washington, and all those counties of unhappy Georgia smitten by the furious swoop of that fearful march to the sea, whose annihilating track is marked to this day, and will be marked for many a year to come, by the ashes of Southern homes.

The most sluggish imagination can easily depict the vastness of the devastation inflicted upon the helpless people of Georgia by those crushing columns of thousands and tens of thousands of vindictive foes, when we find upon page 27 of General Sherman's official report that the invaders "*were instructed to live chiefly, if not solely, upon the country.*"

Here the novelist pauses for a moment, to place before

the reader, who may demand unexaggerated facts, the following extract from General Sherman's official report, page 37 :

"We have also *consumed* the *corn* and *fodder* in a region of country thirty miles on either side of a line from Atlanta to Savannah, as also the *sweet-potatoes*, *cattle*, *hogs*, *sheep*, and *poultry*, and have carried away more than ten thousand horses and mules, as well as a *countless number* of their slaves. I estimate the damage done to the State of Georgia and its military resources at one hundred millions of dollars, at least twenty millions of which has inured to our advantage, and the remainder (eighty millions of dollars) is *simple waste and destruction*.

"This may seem a hard species of warfare, but it brings the sad realities of war home to those who have been directly or indirectly instrumental in involving us in its attendant calamities."

We make no attack upon the great Federal leader of this celebrated march, but merely use his own statement, that the uninformed reader may obtain a correct idea of "the hard species of warfare" the Federal authorities deemed vitally necessary for the subjugation of the Southern Confederacy. The atrocious maxim that "the end justifies the means" seemed to have become the creed of those who warred to restore the Union, and, most assuredly, the ruin, havoc, misery, and woe along that line sixty miles broad, warranted the unfortunate helpless of Georgia in be-

lieving that the days of Alaric, or Attila, or Mohammed had returned to curse the earth.

The sun was still more than an hour high when a troop of mounted Federals halted before the humble residence of Mrs. Jasper, about three miles distant from the house of Mr. Alexander. Mrs. Jasper was the widow of Henry Jasper, who had fallen in one of the battles before Atlanta, leaving a wife and five small children to contend with grim poverty and gnawing want.

Bitter and sore had been the trials of the poor widow after the death of that beloved one, whose stout heart and sturdy arm had ever liberally provided for his family. But she had planted and reaped, laboring in the field like a slave, through rain and heat, struggling to provide food for the five tender ones dependent upon her unaided exertions.

True, the noble-hearted Jerome Alexander had given her all the aid he could, but as there were scores of suffering families demanding his help, Mrs. Jasper had received but occasional aid. Yet she had gathered the wheat sown by her dead husband, shedding bitter tears as she remembered the lost; she had cultivated and gathered the corn planted by that same dear hand, and piously returned thanks to Heaven as she contemplated the fruit of her labor, and rejoiced that though her supply was scanty, yet there was enough to feed her little ones until another year might bring better days.

Of hogs and poultry she had enough to bear her through the coming winter, and the single cow she possessed, the pet of her children, was a rich ally for her household wants.

Her house was an humble structure of logs, roughly but comfortably boarded up without, and neatly though plainly ceiled within. It stood not far from the main road, unpretending and unobtrusive, with a small, rudely-fenced yard in front. Mr. Jasper had belonged to that greatly maligned class of Southern citizens, stigmatized by the slanderers of the misrepresented South, under the name of "poor whites," that is, those who owned no slaves, and little, if any thing else, but literally earned their bread in the "sweat of their faces." Let the records of the great Civil War tell how nobly this class fought ; with what eagerness its humble representatives sprang to arms ; what deeds of heroic courage and endurance they performed ; how they suffered, bled, famished, went in rags, toiled in heat and cold, unpaid, half starved, sick, but defiant to the last ; and wept when great Robert Lee gave his spotless sword to victorious Grant. They fought not to defend their wealth ; they had none. They fought not to save their negroes ; they had none. They fought not for fame or position ; they cared not for these. They fought for the South, for the honor of their native land, and they have added to the greatness of the American name, although the cause for which they struggled lies dead and hoof-beaten beneath the war-steeds of the triumphant North.

Mr. Jasper had given his life to the defence of his country, and the maintenance of his family fell upon the feeble shoulders of his widow. She had discharged that duty well, and in November turned her attention to spinning, weaving, and knitting for her fatherless children.

She was spinning before her fire when her oldest child, a little girl ten years of age, ran in, saying—

“Mother, mother! Look out of the window at the soldiers! They are Yankees, and have stopped at our gate.”

“May our Father in heaven defend us!” exclaimed Mrs. Jasper, as she glanced through the little window and beheld a formidable troop of fierce-looking and bearded men springing to the ground at the gate. “Surely, a poor woman like me can have nothing these men desire.” Yet her heart sank as she noticed two or three wagons also halting before her home.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE BARBAROUS DEED.

THE suspense of the poor widow was not of long duration, for the leader of the troop, the brutal Captain Flaskill, followed by Seth Cashmore and several troopers, dashed down the rickety little gate, and unceremoniously stalked into the room.

At the same moment reports of fire-arms and the squealing of pigs told that the order "to live chiefly, if not solely upon the country," was being strictly carried out by the troopers scattered over the premises.

Mrs. Jasper recoiled from the fierce eyes of the "bummer" captain, as he swaggered into the house; and her children, poor innocents, clustered around her in speechless alarm. It was "a hard species of warfare," but it was "to bring home the sad realities of war to those who were directly or indirectly instrumental" in forcing those stout men in blue from their peaceful Northern homes to sweep Georgia with the torch and the sword.

"Gentlemen," said the widow, pale but firm, "I and my little ones have never done you any harm. I beg that you will not hurt us."

"Hurt you!" roared Flaskill, with one of his huge oaths. "No, we won't hurt you. Do you think we are wolves?"

He looked so ferocious, and roared so loud, and swore so fiercely, that the helpless woman might well have thought him a wolf, or a tiger, or a bear; but she replied meekly:

"No, sir, not that, but we have seen so much trouble that we are afraid of everybody. I am alone with my fatherless children—"

"Fatherless? How came they fatherless? Was there dad a 'reb,' or did he die before the war began?" demanded Tom Flaskill.

"He died in battle, before Atlanta—"

"Ho! then he was a rebel? Well, he was lucky, for after we get the 'reb' army under, we intend to hang every mother's son of 'em."

"Your men are killing all my pigs and poultry. We will starve—"

"Starve then," was the atrocious reply. "We have orders to live off the country. I saw a fine cow—"

"Please don't kill or carry off our cow," said the eldest little girl, as she boldly placed her little hands upon the arm of the captain, and turned her pleading blue eyes up to his.

"Bah, you little she-rebel!" growled the unmoved 'bummer,' "young as you are, I'll be bound you could mix poison for a blue-coat."

"Oh, no! We had one here once—a poor, sick, escaped prisoner from Atlanta," replied the little child, earnestly. "And we nursed him until he could travel, and never told on him, because he said his mother in the North was old and sick, and we thought it none of our business to tell on him. Please spare us our cow at least."

"These rebs can outlie the dogs," said the captain, scornfully. "No, we must have the cow, and all your hogs and chickens, so hush! Here, see those wagons loaded right off."

"Yes, we want to get to Alexander's before night," chimed Seth Cashmore, who was closely examining the

clasps of a large family Bible. "May I never see Boston again, Tom, if the clasp of this book isn't pure gold!"

"Do not mutilate that," exclaimed Mrs. Jasper; "my mother gave it to me years ago."

"Did she? Well, I am greatly obliged to you for keeping it until now. I wonder you didn't subscribe it to the rebel gunboat fund," said Mr. Cashmore, deliberately wrenching the clasp from the Bible and thrusting it into his pocket. "Who'd thought of finding gold in this hovel?"

"I shouldn't wonder if the old she-reb has got a stocking full of half-dollars hid away," cried a trooper, whose long sharp nose seemed to smell gold in the air. "Let's hunt around, boys."

"Sir," said Mrs. Jasper, in a tone of deep despair, and addressing the leader, "you spoke of loading your wagons. For Heaven's sake, as you are a man, and I trust a Christian, I beg you, I pray you not to carry off the few bushels of corn and wheat which my own poor hands have made. Look at these five innocent children, and be merciful!"

"Must have every bushel—live off the country—that's the ticket," replied Flaskill. "If you and your rebel brood suffer, go curse Jeff. Davis and them as put you into it."

Perceiving that the leader was a hard-hearted wretch, incapable of feeling pity, the disconsolate mother appealed

to the troopers, almost kneeling to them, to spare at least a few bushels of her scanty store of grain.

But she might as well have appealed to the wind. They gave her no heed, unless a curse or a scoff. She stood bare-headed in her yard, and with streaming eyes and sinking heart beheld her hogs and poultry shot down by bearded men in blue; saw her only cow slaughtered and cut up, and the pieces tossed into a wagon; saw all her corn and wheat ruthlessly swept away and heaped into the wagon; saw her weeping children clinging to her poor homespun dress, their little hearts terrified by the scene; saw in the future rain, storm, bleak winter, starvation rushing down upon her and those helpless ones, and there in her desecrated home, upon the bare earth, she knelt and lifted her hard-worked and plundered hands to Heaven and prayed that a curse, bitter and scathing, might fall upon those who robbed the widow and her orphans.

Her keen reproaches and sharp supplications infuriated the troopers, and especially their brutal leader. These bummers had ransacked the little log house, which contained but two rooms; had plundered even the humble kitchen, finding even there something to tempt their insatiate cupidity. True, there was little in that impoverished home worth the carrying away; yet it is remarkable, as one of the salient traits in the character of that grand march through Georgia, that the most trifling and useless articles seemed to be precious spoil to the "bummers." Pots,

pans, kettles, *dishcloths*, any and every thing, were carried away, and strewed along the line of march.

Thus the home of Mrs. Jasper was thoroughly ransacked, even her wearing apparel taken; and then, purposely or by accident, the house was fired.

Mrs. Jasper was unconscious that her poor house was in flames until the cries of her children called her attention thither. Even then, those flames could have been extinguished with the aid of the troopers, and the poor woman besought them to assist her. But Flaskill was in no humor to allow his men to help to save the home of a rebel.

"Forward! push on!" he shouted, as he sprang into his saddle. "Let the rebel roost burn."

The troop moved away, leaving the unhappy widow and her five little ones homeless, foodless, while the angry flames roared amid the humble rafters, rapidly adding another heap to the ashes of Southern homes.

When the sun went down fiery and red the darkness of night stole on, and the red glare of the embers revealed the anguish depicted upon the pale face of the houseless widow as she knelt amid her five orphans and cried bitterly: "God help us! God help us!"

The case of Mrs. Jasper is but one of many similar instances in which "the sad realities of war were brought home" to the helpless widows and orphans of Georgia. We read upon page 79 of that official report the following terribly significant words:

"The plantations of this (Newton) county were *thoroughly stripped*, and our troops lived on the fat of the land." "Foraging was carried on to an extensive degree." "A party from one of the brigades of the twentieth corps, while out foraging some distance north of the railroad, at Oxford, were fired upon by bushwhackers, and one of their number was killed."

That was the reason why "here the *order* for RELENTLESS DEVASTATION of the country was carried out," etc.

Because one of the thousands of the invaders of the land was struck down by some unknown hand, houses, churches, colleges, hovels, and mansions, libraries, etc., were given to the torch; that great, savage beast of war, "the order for relentless devastation," was let loose in all its fury, and bidden to do its worst.

Oh, nineteenth century, ever boastful of thy perfection in morality, humanity, civilization, and Christianity, hang thy head to hide thy blushes of shame, if not thy pangs of remorse, when History shall impale thy dark deeds with her inexorable lance, and hold up to the execration of posterity the "order for relentless devastation."

CHAPTER IX.

“LIVING OFF THE COUNTRY.”

THE sun was just disappearing in the west as Captain Flaskill and his troop approached the residence of Mr. Alexander, and the sharp eyes of the heartless Federal marauder caught the glint of steel near the road-gate of the mansion, as he rose over the crest of the hill which overlooked the premises.

“Cashmore,” said he to the speculator, who rode by his side, “some one is ahead of us at the Alexander place, if that house is the one you mentioned.”

“That is the house,” replied Cashmore, as he rose in his stirrups, and leaned forward. “There seems to be a guard pacing before the front gate there; you saw his carbine shine.”

“Yes, that fellow is doubtless on guard, and there are two horses turned loose in the stable-lot. What does that mean?”

“It means that Alexander has prevailed upon some girl-hearted Federal to give him a guard.”

“Very little heed will Tom Flaskill pay to any guard, were he placed by Sherman himself,” growled the marauder, in high indignation. “But I suspect this fellow was posted by Major Irving. He was to push on to Walton

County to burn a railroad station, or something of that kind."

"You are right," replied Cashmore. "I understand it all now. Irving took a fancy to those rebels, the M'Donalds, in Atlanta, and as he has fallen in with them again, he must again display what he calls generosity to the helpless."

"Just so, curse him!" snarled Flaskill, as he twisted his red mustache in huge disdain. "I owe him a stab under the fifth rib for that hammering he treated me to in Atlanta—you remember—the flag affair."

"Oh yes, I shall not soon forget it," replied Cashmore, with an ugly grimace, "nor that Irving was backed by one of his lieutenants—Giles, I think, was the name of the cur."

"True, Giles is his shadow, and may I die in Andersonville if that fellow pacing the piazza so stiffly does not look like Giles!" exclaimed Flaskill, as he halted to stare at the mansion.

"That's Giles," replied Cashmore. "I'd know his strut a mile. What shall we do?"

"Do? Do as I please," roared Flaskill, dashing on, Cashmore following closely. "Just let John Giles chirp to me, and I'll let him know the weight of my fist, the beggar. He's one of those milk-blooded hounds that say rebels have rights."

"What nonsense!" chimed in the speculator; who, having no courage of his own, was glad to see that his fero-

cious comrade intended to disregard the wishes of Major Irving. "Of course, rebels have no rights. Besides, you have orders to cripple the enemy in every way possible; to consume his grain, carry off his stock, destroy his provender—"

"Certainly I have. That's the plan and policy of this campaign. But, here we are before the front gate."

"Halt!—Prepare to dismount!—Dismount!" cried Flaskill to his troop, which numbered nearly eighty men, rough, rude, lawless fellows, the offscourings of the Federal army, and much of the character of their captain.

"Halt! You cannot pass here," said the guard at the gate, firmly.

"I cannot! Who placed you here?" demanded Flaskill, eyeing the soldier fiercely.

"I did, Captain Flaskill, with orders from Major Irving," said Lieutenant Giles, who had hastened from the piazza.

"Oh, Miss Major Nancy!" sneered the marauding captain.

"A better man than any of your breed, Tom Flaskill," retorted the lieutenant, who was a tall, dark-faced man, a native of Pennsylvania, and wholly fearless of Flaskill and his troop behind him.

"Arrest that man!" shouted Flaskill, at once seizing the opportunity afforded by the indiscretion of the hot-blooded lieutenant. "He is guilty of disrespect to his superior officer. Arrest him!"

John Giles was no favorite among the lawless troopers of Flaskill's command, and many of them were indebted to him for lonely hours in the guard-house at Atlanta. A strict and severe disciplinarian, he had never overlooked any misdemeanor which fell under his vigilant eye, and Flaskill's troopers sprang toward him, hoping he would resist. But the officer saw his peril at once, and though he drew his sword, it was only to snap the blade across his knee, saying :

"Captain Flaskill, this is all paltry and cowardly subterfuge. You did not intend to heed the guard placed by Major Irving. Arrest me, then ; but you will have to answer for the act to your superiors in rank, and afterward to me."

"I am able to paddle my canoe in any puddle you or Irving can make," was the coarse reply. "I command here, sir. There are your horses, and I advise you and that fellow with the carbine to mount and leave."

"Duck him, cap ! Ride him on a rail !" yelled the troopers. "He's half a rebel himself."

The disturbance at the gate had attracted the attention of Mr. Alexander and his family, and all had hurried from the house to the piazza.

A shudder of alarm thrilled Mrs. M'Donald's blood as she recognized the harsh voice of Captain Flaskill louder than all ; but she felt her heart sink with dismay as old Myra came running from the front gate, saying :

"Missus, pray to de Lor' to sabe us! dat Seff Cashmore is wid 'em, and got on an officer's coat."

"Seth Cashmore! Then we are to be insulted and ill-treated."

"Run, missus! an' young missus too," urged old Myra. "Dar's time if you move quick—go troo de back lot, an' take to de woods."

"I agree with your servant," said Mr. Alexander, anxiously. "Cashmore has the power and the baseness to do any thing."

The shouting around Lieutenant Giles had become very loud, and terrified the ladies greatly. Mrs. M'Donald resolutely refused to retreat to the shelter of the woods, but insisted upon the instant flight of her daughter, whose peril, she urged, was much greater than hers.

"I will not move one inch without you, mother," replied Myrtis, firmly. "I would die a thousand deaths in those dark woods, imagining you in peril."

"Then I will go with you," said her mother, bursting into tears. "God knows I never have turned my back in flight till now, and that I would not now, but for your sake. I know that wretch Cashmore is capable of any villany."

"Go, den! go!" cried Myra. "I'll stay to gib you all de time I can. Leab me to fool Seff an' de blue locusses. Dar, now! go! Rite troo de garden, ober de fence into de field, den inter de pine thicket—don't hide in dat cane-brake—dey sure to look dar—truss in de Lord!"

The M'Donalds had no time to spare in securing more clothing, but hurried through the house into the garden, and were in the field beyond when Flaskill called out to his men :

"Down with the fence! We need wagon room here."

The powerful hands of fourscore men, surging simultaneously at the front-yard fence, instantly prostrated it to the ground. It went down with a crash, and struck the earth with a heavy thud, which reached the ears of the fugitive ladies.

Lieutenant Giles and his companion, perceiving that their presence afforded no protection to the premises, and rightly judging that Flaskill would delight in increased brutality if they remained to see it, mounted their horses and galloped away.

"Men like these, and deeds like these," thought the insulted lieutenant, "disgrace the Union cause, and serve only to further embitter that sectional hatred from which sprang this disgraceful and fratricidal war. Go on, Tom Flaskill; you will have to answer to me for this outrage."

"Drive in the empty wagons," commanded Flaskill. "Down with that fence on the left, and drive the teams to the corn-cribs and wheat-houses! Kill all the stock that is not fit to take with us."

"It's getting very dark," said a teamster, as he drove his broad-wheeled wagon into the flower-garden, crushing and destroying rare and costly plants, once the pride and delight of Mrs. Alexander and her absent daughter.

"Dark! You want light," said Cashmore, with his evil leer of malice. "Yonder is the gin-house, and there is a shed crammed with cotton. No doubt this old rebel has subscribed it to the rebel cotton loan."

"No matter whether he has or not," exclaimed Flaskill, his destructive propensity at once aroused. "We need light. Go set fire to the gin-house and the cotton."

Three or four troopers at once sprang forward to obey a command so perfectly in unison with their instincts, while Flaskill, followed by Cashmore and others, advanced to the piazza.

Mr. Alexander met them with heroic firmness as they swaggered up the steps.

"You have made yourselves at home, gentlemen," said he, in a tone of insulted dignity, "therefore no welcome from me is necessary."

"None in the world, my bully old rebel," replied Flaskill, insolently knocking off the hat of the old gentleman. "Cashmore, I have never met one of those old white-bearded traitors that didn't try to play the Roman senator, curse 'em!"

"That's so," chimed in the speculator, whose baleful, frog-like eyes were rolling about in eager search of the M'Donalds. "They all think themselves a race of kings—you see, they are cotton kings."

"I and all that I have is in your power," continued Mr. Alexander, as his wife picked up his hat and laid it aside. "I can make no resistance—"

"Suppose you could, old man; suppose you could," cried Flaskill, briskly, and seeking provocation. "Would you resist, eh? would you show your rebel teeth?"

But the old planter was as wary and prudent as he was courageous. He saw the trap, and avoided it.

"I never suppose impossibilities—it would be folly for a man of my age to do so," he replied, quietly; though his hot Georgian blood boiled in his old shrivelled veins, and fire flashed in his steady eyes. "You come as victors, and the glory of the victor is in being ever merciful to the vanquished."

"Here are the keys of the house, and of all our trunks," said meek and resigned Mrs. Alexander, extending several bunches of keys to the captain.

"Keys!" snarled the marauder, dashing them from the hand of the lady with a fierce gesture of savage scorn, "I carry my keys to all rebel locks here."

He clapped his hairy hand upon the hilt of his sabre, and then slapped the holster of his revolver, enforcing these ferocious gestures with an oath.

The hand which had so gently and beseechingly extended to him the keys was the hand of a woman; a pale, thin, time-withered, and trembling hand; the delicate, finely-shaped hand of an aged Southern matron, almost old enough to have been his mother's mother; the hand of a lady, aged, feeble, decrepit: but with a single fierce sweep of his heavy fist he dashed the keys to the floor.

What cared Captain Tom Flaskill, "bummer" captain of the Federal host, for a lady's soft palm? Nothing. Plunder, rapine, violence, were as the breath of his tiger-like nostrils.

The rejected keys fell upon the floor of the piazza with a harsh clang, and the aged matron stooped to pick them up, saying :

"There is little need to be so rude, my son !"

My son ! The gentle term should have melted his brazen heart, if not to pity, at least to respect. But obdurate ever, and eagerly seeking a provocation to harsher conduct, the red-whiskered pandour of the North raised his heavy boot, and kicked the keys from the piazza, saying, with an oath :

"There, let them go. You'll have little need of keys or locks when we leave."

"As God wills, so it shall ever be," replied the aged lady, rising from her stooping posture, and calmly placing her hands upon her husband's arm.

The words of the marauder had warned her that her property was to be destroyed, and the red glare of the devouring flames, which wrapped the gin-house in a fiery mantle, told her that the torch was to wreak its rage upon her premises. At once her heart cast off all thought of perishing wealth, and sprang to guard her husband. She knew him well ; knew that he was wary and cautious, prudent and calm, but she knew that age had not cooled the

hot Alexander blood from which he sprang; knew that though a thousand stinging insults, a thousand coarse affronts levelled against himself might be met by a scornful yet prudent disdain, Jerome Alexander could not bear to see his wife insulted.

As she placed her thin and aged hands upon his arm, she felt the tough muscles of the old planter swelling beneath her touch, and a glance at his face told her that the flames of the burning gin-house were not hotter than the passion which sparkled in his eyes.

"My husband! Jerome! Say nothing, I pray you. Let them work their will."

The old planter bit his lip, and a tear stole into his eye, a tear of agony, for like all of his race and land he was brave and sensitive. But he restrained himself from smiting the mouth of the marauder with his staff, and, clinching his powerless hands, said not a word.

At this moment Seth Cashmore espied old Myra standing near the hall.

"Ho! you are there, are you, black owl?" said Seth. "You see I am a true bloodhound on the M'Donald track. Where are they?"

"Ki! If youze de bloodhound on de track, you orter know where de ladies is," replied Myra, in no wise daunted by his great black whiskers, hooked nose, and staring eyes.

"They are hiding, are they?"

"You wait twill dey comes down-stars," said Myra

"Reckon dey ain't half so anxious to see you as you is to see dem. What you want wid my missuses?"

"You go and tell them to come down and exchange compliments with me," said Cashmore, in high glee, and supposing that his persecuted victims were in the house.

"Wait twill I tell dem," replied the old negress, hurrying away.

"And now old man," said Flaskill, we will look into your private property. Got any gold, or silver, or plate?"

"I see that your wagons are being loaded with what little corn, wheat, and oats I have," replied the old planter.

"Do you intend to take all?"

"Every grain, by George," swore the marauder.

"Captain," said Mr. Alexander, "you are not merely depriving me and my family, both black and white, of our food for the winter. There are many perishing families, deprived by the war of their male supporters, almost entirely dependent upon me for daily food."

"So much the better, my old rebel. We are now winding up the war. We are going to starve you out. Those rebel rascals in the army will never lay down their arms while you and other stay-at-home rebels raise corn and wheat. We are on the right track now; we intend to strike at the women and children; we mean to win the fight if we have to exterminate every Southern man, woman, and child. But you have not answered my question. Have you any specie?"

Mr. Alexander was a strictly conscientious man, and paused before he replied. He had no specie of his own, but his son-in-law had confided to his care some three thousand dollars in gold, before he went to war. It was a sacred deposit, to be reserved for the support of his daughter, should her husband fall. For a moment Mr. Alexander hesitated, but he soon replied :

“My gold and silver I spent long ago, sir. I have none. There are a few silver spoons and some few articles of plate in the house, but surely you are not marauders?”

“Silver spoons!” cried Seth Cashmore, “that is fair game. Where are they?”

“Hold!” cried Flaskill, grasping his friend by the collar. “You have a way of grabbing every thing before a man can wink. We share alike in all these rebel pickings.”

“Of course, of course!” said Cashmore. “I believe in the fair thing every time.”

“Then we’ll hunt together,” replied Flaskill, as both entered the house, followed by several of the troop.

“My dear husband, bear up,” said Mrs. Alexander, as they stood alone upon the piazza, the old planter gazing sternly upon his burning property.

“It is hard to see the reward of years of labor thus swept away,” replied Mr. Alexander in a firm tone, though a tear gleamed in his eye. “I am an old and feeble man, Eunice, and have never harmed these men. Yet, I do not

grieve so much over the loss of my individual property as I do over the future of my country. This march has but commenced, yet what woe and havoc has already been inflicted! Think how vast will be the ruin by the time this immense army shall have reached the sea! My poor neighbors! What a winter is before the widows and children of the Confederate dead! This is war; this is the boasted civilization of our race."

"Jerome," said his wife, "had you not better go away? I fear that the captain of these men suspects that you know something of the gold of our daughter's husband."

"And why? How could he suspect," asked Mr. Alexander, quickly.

"I do not know; but when you said that you had no specie, he winked at that man Cashmore."

"Let him suspect," replied Mr. Alexander, sternly. "He cannot force the secret from me. I have heard that men in the uniform of the Federal army have actually tortured men and women of the South. It is horrible to reflect that white men, civilized men, citizens of a great and enlightened nation, should so far retrograde into barbarism as to *torture* their fellow-creatures. The savage, whose ignorance may palliate his ferocity, tortures for revenge, or because it is the century-clad custom of his ancestors; but the white man—the Federal—tortures for gold! We can but place ourselves in the hands of God."

The aged pair remained silent; the soldiers began to

pass near them, leaving the house with loads of plunder upon their shoulders.

The scene was one of peculiar terror and excitement. The premises of the helpless planter were brilliantly illuminated by the flames of the blazing cotton and gin-house; and as the troopers had found a much larger supply of fodder than their wagons could haul away, the torch was applied to that also.

“The order for relentless devastation was strictly carried out!”

Many troopers held high revel in hunting out and shooting down the hogs and poultry. The four mules of the planter, all that had been spared to him by the war, were led into the front yard, and being found unserviceable for military use, were shot—a useless deed of barbarity, but the policy of the march was to “consume and destroy,” and to leave the country “stripped” of every resource of recuperation.

Mr. Alexander knew that he was not alone in this calamitous hour, for the horizon, on every side, was red with the flames of burning farms. North, south, east, and west, in whatsoever direction he turned his eyes, he beheld that lurid, ominous glare which told him that the torch of the invader was fiercely at work. The carnival of uniformed incendiaries was in full blast, and as it roared and raged in Newton County, so it was fiendishly jubilant in other counties; so it continued even to the sea, and there,

changing its course, afterward made red and murky the skies of ravaged South Carolina.

Blazing Southern homes by scores, by hundreds, fell a sacrifice to the policy of "relentless devastation." The sword, the bayonet, the cannon and the shell had failed to end the determined resistance of the South ; therefore the torch must reduce to ashes the homes of these invincible "men in gray."

Well might Mr. Alexander exclaim, as he gazed upon the reddened skies :

"This is not war ; it is extermination !"

But his reflections were cut short by a pistol-shot, and a shrill cry of agony from old Myra, and without hesitation he and his wife hastened into the house.



CHAPTER X.

HUMAN HYENAS.

MR. SETH CASHMORE and his bosom friend, the valiant Captain Flaskill, having provided themselves with lights, thoroughly searched all the lower rooms of the mansion, and appropriated such valuables as they could find, until their pockets were well crammed with silver spoons, forks, cups, mugs, candle-snuffers, and every article, even to a

baby's rattle, which so much as smelled of gold or silver.

Mr. Cashmore and his friends, much irritated in not finding more of the precious metals, vented their heroic rage by smashing china and glassware, dashing mirrors and crockery to atoms, and stamping upon the fragments. Jars of jellies and sweetmeats were carried to the wagons or thrown upon the floor. Dried and preserved meats, pickles, and the like were fair spoils, and conveyed away.

Mr. Cashmore first entered the parlor, which was a mere wreck of what it once had been, and was surprised to find old Myra in the act of taking down a portrait.

"Hey, you wench, what are you doing with that picture? Who is it?" yelled Cashmore, advancing his torch of resinous pine. "What! Hardeman M'Donald again? So you carried that from Atlanta!"

Flaskill, entering at the moment, instantly recognized the portrait, and cried out:

"That old rebel again! Well, I'll spoil his beauty this time."

With these words, he drew his pistol and discharged it into the face of the portrait. The ball passed through the painted canvas and cut off a finger from the hand of the faithful old negress who had endeavored to preserve this memento of her beloved master.

The pain of the wound caused Myra to shriek, and let fall the portrait. No sooner was it upon the floor, than

Cashmore set his heavy foot upon it, and, spinning round upon his iron-shod heel, defaced it forever.

"Now, then, if there's much beauty left in the face of the proud old tiger who once called me a cut-purse knave, you are welcome to it," snarled the speculator, while his ugly features flamed with rage. "I'd feel a great deal better, I would," he continued, stamping his heels upon the portrait with devilish malice flaring in his great eyes, "if it was the real face of Hardeman M'Donald; but I ain't done with the breed yet. Where are they? Where is the proud old woman who ordered me from her house as if I were a cur? And where is that dainty daughter of hers? Come, I have waited long enough for them to welcome my arrival. Where are they? Answer, you black owl, or I'll take more than a claw from your monkey carcass."

Old Myra, intent upon saving the portrait, mutilated though it was, snatched it from the floor as Cashmore stepped aside, and darted from the room.

Cashmore was about to pursue, when Mr. and Mrs. Alexander entered the apartment, and he turned his attention to them.

"Here, you hoary-headed rebel," said he, grasping the old planter's collar, "I begin to suspect that the M'Donalds are not in the house."

"The M'Donalds? Have you been up-stairs," quietly replied the old man.

"No, but some of the soldiers have, and they say there is not a soul up there. But let me see for myself," roared Cashmore, hurrying away.

"I heard the report of a pistol, a scream of pain, captain, and I see blood upon the floor," remarked Mr. Alexander to Flaskill, who was examining a silver-handled paper-cutter. "I hope no violence has been done. We are anxious to avoid all cause for violence."

"Keep your tongue to talk for your own hide," replied Flaskill, as he wrenched the handle from the paper-cutter. "Here, two of you keep your eyes upon this man and woman. I'll have something to say to you both pretty soon. I guess we might as well begin now," he continued, glancing around at the dark and eager faces of his comrades. "Call Cashmore, some of you, he knows all about the matter."

The old planter and his wife exchanged glances of alarm; but though Mr. Alexander grew very pale, his eye remained firm and his features steady. His feeble wife placed her hand within his, and addressed the marauder.

"Captain, you cannot mean to harm two old people like us. Look at us. We are both old and feeble. Surely, you do not mean to hurt us. And you, soldiers of a great and victorious people, you will not injure us?"

"That is as it may be," replied Flaskill, morosely. "You have lied, at least your husband has—but here comes

one who can surprise you," he said, as Cashmore entered, savage at not finding his intended victims.

"Captain," he cried, "they are not in the house—they cannot be far off, for I know that I saw both of them standing on the piazza when we halted, or just after."

"Very well," replied Flaskill, quickly. "Sergeant Clarke, take a few men and scour the premises everywhere, and all about the neighborhood. Pick up a nigger or two, and make them guide you to all the hiding-places hereabouts. If they refuse, shoot 'em down. Two rebel women, dressed in black, named M'Donald—they must be near."

The sergeant hastened away, and Flaskill continued :

"Now, Cashmore, tell this old rebel what you know, so that he may see his position."

"Jerome Alexander," said Cashmore, in a bullying tone, as he extended and shook his fist in the face of the old man, "I saw your son-in-law in 1861, in Atlanta, place in your hands three thousand dollars in gold. I know the exact amount, for I saw and heard him count it out to you upon a table in a room of the Trout House in Atlanta. My room adjoined the one in which you and he were ; and the table upon which the money was counted was against the door leading from that room into mine. I looked through the keyhole—not two feet from the gold—it was in half and whole eagles. Do you deny it?"

"Go on, sir," replied the planter in a resolute voice, while his firm lip seemed to grow hard and white.

"You placed the gold in a tin canister, and over that a bag of coarse cloth," continued Cashmore. "Your son-in-law used these words—I noted them down at the time," said Cashmore, producing a note-book, and reading from it: "'Keep this money until after the war, father. I may die; and my wife must not be destitute. The South will be impoverished, even if she gains her independence. Keep the gold for my wife. I know you will. Do not invest it in any thing, nor place it in bank, but hide it, bury it, keep its existence secret, except from my wife and her mother.'"

"Well?" remarked Mr. Alexander, as the speculator paused, and replaced his note-book.

"Well! I say well," cried Flaskill, fired by the calmness of the planter. "This is likely to be any thing but well for you, my stubborn rebel, unless you hand over the gold. Three thousand dollars in gold! Come, that is worth hunting for."

"Then why don't you hunt, sir?" retorted the brave old man.

"You will not give it up, then!" roared Flaskill, grasping his pistol and thrusting its muzzle into the old man's face.

"It is not mine to give, sir. You need not attempt to scare me by putting your pistol in my face. I looked at British bayonets and Indian rifles years before you were born. I did not flinch then, sir, and I shall not flinch now," calmly replied Mr. Alexander.

"Tie his hands behind him!" yelled Flaskill. "Pull his wife away, and if she don't keep quiet, tie her too."

Mrs. Alexander had thrown her arms around the neck of her husband when the brutal order to bind him was given, but he quietly released himself from her embrace, saying:

"Eunice, let me bear every indignity they may inflict, rather than see you insulted. Here, Federal soldiers, bind these feeble old hands—they might hurt some of you."

Neither his age nor his sarcasm had any effect upon those lawless men. They seized him and tied his withered hands behind him with a strong cord.

Does the reader imagine this all fiction? Should he be so woefully ignorant of the warfare waged in Georgia in 1864, and again in 1865, in another grand march, we will inform him that similar and more atrocious scenes were so common then, that no man could narrate one before his hearer would match it with another, and another, until the names of scores of hundreds of victims had been mentioned—well-known names, revered and beloved names of Georgia—Holts, Harveys, Warners, Carters, Leonards, Howards, Carekers, Husseys—but a volume could be filled with the names of those who were maltreated, buffeted, bound, hanged, tortured, and outraged by "men in blue" in search for hidden gold.

In the great majority of cases there was no hidden hoard, but stimulated by the belief that every old white-headed

farmer had buried treasure, the invaders hesitated at no violence in endeavoring to extort the supposed secret. It is a sad commentary upon the license of military rule, and also upon the vaunted civilization of the soldiers who perpetrated these deeds, when it is stated that white men of the nineteenth century acted the part of torturing savages, and obtained their protection and right to plunder, burn, torture, and hang a helpless population, from that order which our quoted staff-officer styles "the order for relentless devastation."

If the Southern people were rebels, had they been Sepoys, or Ladrones, or Camanches, they were human beings at least; but they were human beings of the highest and most refined order; they had at least the rights of brutes, the right to be protected from torture, the right to live. If their stout men were in the army, in open rebellion, the fact gave no right to the invader to treat their old men, their women and children like vermin. But the Southern people were so treated, and the fact remains, to sully forever every laurel won by the victors, to steep it in blood and ashes, to scent it with the smoke of burning homes, to cluster around it the memories of starving widows, famishing orphans, and the groans of white-haired, tottering old men, made beggars and outcasts, until the generous bosom of the weeping South gathered them in from the storms into which they were mercilessly hurled.

"Now do you deny that you received the three thousand dollars?" demanded Flaskill.

"You have no right to ask me the question. Therefore I refuse to reply."

"You refuse! Very well. But unless you tell me where you have hidden the money, I will burn down your house. But perhaps your wife knows something of the matter," said Flaskill.

"I do not know where the gold is, sir; but if I did, I would not tell you," replied the old lady.

"You wouldn't, you rebel!" cried Flaskill, irritated by such firmness, and smiting that pale and withered cheek with his open hand.

"Ruffian! coward! to strike a woman—an old woman!" exclaimed Mr. Alexander, hoarse with passion. "You did well, scoundrel dog, to bind my hands, or, weak and old as I am, I would tear your throat! We are in your power. Do your worst with me; I am a man, but let my wife alone. Wretch, a righteous God will be my avenger!"

"Lead him into the yard," commanded Flaskill, "and if he does not tell where the gold is within five minutes, set fire to his house."

The old man was dragged violently from his house, shoved down the steps of the piazza, and hustled into the middle of the front yard amid the hootings, curses, and jeers of the troop of "bummers."

Still his courage and fortitude never forsook him, and his steady eyes flashed defiance upon his abusers.

"He's game," whispered Cashmore to Flaskill. "You can never learn the secret from him, and it is plain that his wife does not know where the money is."

"I have dealt with hard-headed rebels before now," replied Flaskill. "It is astonishing how these old fellows will hold out. I have hung several until they were nearly dead, and failed to wring their secret from them. What are those in that corner? gravestones!" he asked, as his roving eye caught sight of the white tombstones, glistening in the firelight.

"Yes, they are gravestones," replied Cashmore, as he examined these sad mementoes of the dead. "I see they are the graves of three rebels—the sons of old Alexander."

"What safer place to hide the gold in?" exclaimed Flaskill, with animated tone. "Near Rome, I once found a good haul of plate and jewels hid in a pretended grave, eh!"

"Let me assert, upon my solemn oath," said Mr. Alexander, who overheard this conversation, "that those three graves contain nothing except the coffins and bodies of my three dead boys."

"I think you are lying," replied the valiant "bummer," kicking down one of the headstones. "You are too anxious to keep us from searching."

"If I am anxious, and indeed I admit that I am, it is because I would not have the last resting-place of my sons

desecrated by a vain and sacrilegious search for gold," said the aged planter in a stern and rebuking tone.

"Bring spades here, some of you," cried Flaskill. "I will soon see what is buried here."

"Man! be merciful! Have some shame if you have not pity!" cried Mrs. Alexander, hastening to the graves, and placing her hands upon the arm of the ferocious captain.

He cast her aside with a fierce oath, and warned her not to disturb him again. The poor mother could only weep and kneel, asking aid from Heaven to support her under this sad outrage to her beloved dead.

One of the most repulsive features in that eager search for gold and hidden treasures, which formed so salient a trait in the character of those who disgraced and degraded the Federal arms, during the invasion of Southern homes, was the desecration of graves. This fact is too well known to need expatiating upon here, and we can only mourn over that fearful depravity of the human heart which transformed men into hyenas and jackals; a depravity which did not spring from hatred of the dead, nor from that bitter sectional malice which resulted in the desolation of the South; but which arose from avarice and cupidity of the basest origin, and had full scope for exercise under "the order for relentless devastation." The same fell spirit is still rampant, for it was but the other day that we read in a New York paper:

“LOYALTY ILLUSTRATED.—We take the following from the New York Weekly Magazine, July 7th, published by the American News Company: ‘It has been discovered that the men recently employed by the Government [all loyal of course] to disinter the bodies of our dead soldiers on the battle-fields near Richmond, after having searched the bodies for money and jewelry, pulled open the mouths of the corpses, punched out the teeth, examined if they were plugged, and if they were, cracked the teeth to pieces for the gold-fillings. No insult that rebels have ever offered to the loyal dead can approach in atrocity this most incredible desecration.’”

Is not this feature of the barbarism of the nineteenth century most horrible to contemplate?

Well, this barbarism had full, free, and fearful scope during the Grand March, even unto its end, at Raleigh.



CHAPTER XI.

HANGING FOR GOLD.

MR. ALEXANDER, unable to prevent the sacrilege maintained a dignified silence, while the “bummers” toiled sharply at the graves. Mrs. Alexander groaned as she heard the fall of the tombstones, but her voice was hushed in speechless woe.

It was a terrible trial of the firmness of the aged planter, to behold those fiend-like ruffians in their unholy work, to know that the gold they sought was not there,

and to feel that a word, a gesture, from him would protect the dead, and point out the spot where he had concealed the money years before. But he knew that his duty to the living, to his son-in-law, to his daughter, and his grandchildren, commanded him to remain silent ; and, indeed, such was the Spartan-like fortitude and Roman-like pride of his nature, that it is not at all probable that he would have yielded to compulsion, under any circumstances.

The old man looked on grimly, his eyes sometimes wandering from the graves to his sobbing wife, and then to the terror-smitten faces of the few servants who remained upon the premises. Not once did his glance stray to the spot where that for which they sought was hid. He knew that the keen and experienced scrutiny of Cashmore and Flaskill was fixed upon him, and he sought by his air to impress them with the fact that the gold was not where they sought.

Probably Flaskill became convinced that he was upon the wrong track, from the composed look of the sturdy planter ; for no sooner had the spades touched the coffins than he commanded his men to desist.

The dead of Mr. Alexander were more fortunate in their repose than many others then beneath the sod of prostrate Georgia. As we write, an instance of the many which occurred, flashes into our mind, and we give it with the true name of the afflicted family :

In Washington County, Georgia, six miles east of Sandersville, the Federals of Sherman's army, dug up the body of Mr. Thomas Tanner, in search of hidden treasure; and though implored by the gray-haired old father to permit him to reinter the corpse of his son, they threatened to blow his brains out if he touched the body. The desecrated corpse remained unburied for three days. Nor was this the only instance of the kind in that county!

No doubt, had our "bummer" captain not been confident that the graves of the three Alexanders contained no hidden gold, he would have rifled the coffins, and been as brutal as his fellow-Federals in Washington County. But there was a scornful and triumphant gleam in the steady eyes of the old planter, which convinced Flaskill that he was wasting time in useless search.

"Set fire to the old rebel's house!" he shouted. "If that does not bring him to his senses, we will try the rope."

While these events were transpiring in the front yard, several of the troopers had busied themselves in performing an act of useless and wanton barbarity in the rear yard—a deed often committed by the "bummers" of this march. Having found much more bacon in the smoke-house of the old planter than could be conveniently carried away, the troopers made a layer of Mrs. Alexander's dresses upon the ground; on this they placed a layer of bacon, shoulders and hams; then a layer of the clothes of Mr. Alexander;

then another layer of bacon ; then another layer of the clothes of Mrs. Alexander, and other apparel of the family ; and so on, until there was a great pile of bacon and garments. Covering the heap with bed-clothes, straw, loose cotton, and furniture, these civilized warriors set the heap on fire, and performed a kind of extemporaneous war-dance around the flames, thus resembling evil spirits holding midnight orgies. The flames gleamed upon their bronzed and bearded faces, as they whirled, danced, and yelled, while the dense smoke and suffocating stench of the pile added to the hideousness of the scene.

Hearing the shouts of those in the front yard, when the order was given to fire the house, the whole command rushed into the doomed mansion, torches in hand.

“ Our beloved home will soon be in ashes,” said Mr. Alexander to his wife, as he saw the flaming of the incendiary torches through the windows.

“ God’s will be done, my husband ! ” replied the meek and pious wife, clasping her withered hands, and raising her streaming eyes to heaven.

“ We have spent many happy years in that house,” continued Mr. Alexander, gazing mournfully upon the devoted mansion. “ We have loved, and adorned and cherished it, until every timber is dear to us, Eunice. Our children were all born there. God give me strength to bear up under this chasetisement ! ”

The flames began to take firm hold of the seasoned

timbers of the house, fired as it was in hundreds of places. The "bummers" dashed in the plastering of the walls with their heels, and thrust fire into these openings, so that the intensity of the heat soon drove them from the house.

The fire roared and rushed here and there, lapping the edifice from basement to roof, darting its red tongues from doors and windows, hurling great volumes of smoke high in the air; and, as if inspired with the same vindictive rage which had created it, crackling fiercely and loudly as it charged from chamber to chamber and filled the desecrated halls of this once-honored Southern home, with a red and sombre torrent of living wrath.

"You see we are in dead earnest," said Flaskill, as he returned to the side of his aged victim. "You may now know that I shall not hesitate to hang you, if you refuse to tell where you hid the gold."

Jerome Alexander, a descendant of those brave North Carolinians of the Revolution of 1776, who at Mecklenburg promulgated the first Declaration of Independence, and on the banks of the Alamance shed the first British blood of that seven years' war for freedom, regarded the truculent "bummer" captain with a stern and steady gaze of fathomless contempt.

"You may hang me, sir, you may torture me; but though my frail and feeble body may groan with anguish, my tongue will never betray the secret of another."

"Jerome, Jerome, my dear husband," said his weeping wife, as she clung to him in her anguish of heart, "I know that our son-in-law, and our daughter, would gladly lose ten, nay, a thousand times the amount to save you from injury."

"That's sensible talk, old lady," cried Flaskill, approvingly. "Put it to the obstinate old rebel mule in that style, and you may save his neck from being stretched."

"Eunice," replied the firm-hearted old Georgian, turning his steady and heroic eyes upon her, "I know that they would give even their lives to save me from harm, and therefore am I willing to give my life to save them and their little ones from starvation. But, had I not even this powerful motive to bind my tongue, these wretches should never force Jerome Alexander to enrich them. Do you, my dear wife, retire to some spot where you can neither see nor hear what they do—"

"No, none of that," cried the brutal Cashmore, as he grasped the arm of the wife, as she was about to leave the scene, unable to endure the sight of a tortured husband. "You must stay and see the fun. Besides, d'ye see, it will be worse than the rope to him to have you looking on."

This was a refinement of barbarity not peculiar to Mr. Seth Cashmore. It is true, that in some of the many instances, in which the ruthless invaders of 1864 and of 1865 tortured old white-haired men to force them to reveal im-

aginary hoards, the cruel troopers would lead their victims to some retired spot, ashamed or unwilling that the families of the tortured should witness these revolting atrocities ; but in most cases the heads of families were tortured before their doors, in the presence of weeping, praying, shrieking wives and daughters—thus using a twofold torture, fit illustration of Yankee brutality and Puritan deviltry.

“Bring a rope !” commanded Flaskill, fiercely. “I have half a mind to string them both up, back to back.”

This savage threat, however, did not seem to be popular with his men, who called out :

“No, no. She is an old woman, half dead already. Let her go. Squeeze the stubborn old rebel.”

A cord, knotted into a hangman’s noose, was cast around the neck of the aged planter—but we will not enter further into the sickening details of the scene. Suffice it to say, that the unfortunate old man was hanged like a felon to the limb of a tree near the graves of his three sons ; hanged torturingly, again and again, until consciousness forsook the battered frame, and not until then did the ferocious gold-mad marauders let the corpse-like body fall heavily upon the ground.

“I believe the obstinate old fool is dead, and his secret with him,” growled Flaskill. “Well, it was his own fault—he could have saved us all this trouble, as well as his life, by telling where his gold is hid. Come, we have

finished this business, and not made much either. Let the wagons move on. Fall in, men, fall in. We have other places to visit. Hurry up, hurry up! The old rebel has delayed us.—Well, sergeant, couldn't you find any thing of those M'Donalds?"

"Not a trace, captain," replied the sergeant. "There are too many good hiding-places around, and we know nothing of the country."

"Very well. Let them go. We'll take our revenge out of some other rebels. Prepare to mount! Mount! Forward!"

Mrs. Alexander had thrown herself upon the body of her husband as soon as it was abandoned by the "bummers;" and, regardless of all else, endeavored to restore him to life and consciousness. She loosened the cruel cord from his lacerated neck, chafed his hands, and used every means in her feeble power to recall the light of life to his eyes.

The blare of the Federal bugle as the troopers hurried to their saddles seemed to reach the stunned ears of the planter, for his eyes lost their glassy stare, and his lips essayed to speak!

"Thank God! he lives," whispered the poor wife, as she beckoned to a terrified negress standing near. "Go bring some water from the spring—the well is destroyed—be quick!"

The negress hastened away, while the wife, trembling

lest the departing troopers should discover that their victim still lived, and return to make sure their butchery; and trembling still more lest the bright fire gleaming again in those beloved eyes should suddenly and forever die out, poured forth her muttered and incoherent prayers to Heaven for aid and protection.

Her home, her beloved home, was totally destroyed. Mansion, kitchen, out-houses, smoke-house, carriage-house, stables, cabins, cribs—all were red-hot embers, or heaps of smouldering ashes. All her male servants had been swept away, gone to swell that host of miserables which dwindled and scattered their bones from Atlanta to the sea. Her plantation was stripped, all worldly goods remorselessly swallowed up by flame and robbery, but she thought not of these. Her husband, gasping for life, lay before her, and her whole soul was attentive to him and God alone.

The marauders were far away; she heard their hateful bugle-note echoing amid the distant hills, when a voice spoke by her side.

“Great Heaven! have they murdered the noble old man?”

She turned and beheld Mrs. McDonald kneeling near her, while the graceful form of Myrtis bent over her mother.

“Ah, I fear they have, I fear they have,” replied Mrs. Alexander. “And yet his eyes seem so clear and intelligent! Look! Do you think he will live? Speak to your poor wife, Jerome, my husband.”

Mrs. M'Donald, always more or less an invalid, had with her both camphor and hartshorn, and as the negress returned with a gourd of water she mingled a few drops of the medicines with the liquid, and succeeded in making the old planter swallow it.

He struggled a moment for his choked voice and found it.

"I live—I am better. Wife—are they gone?"

"He speaks! Blessed be the name of the Lord!" exclaimed Mrs. Alexander. "Yes, Jerome, they have gone."

"Help me to my feet," said Mr. Alexander, huskily.

"Not yet," replied Mrs. M'Donald, whose experience in the Atlanta hospitals was now of great use. "Lie still as you are until your strength comes back. Oh, if we had some spirits or strong cordial!"

"Wait, missus," cried old Myra, who had joined the party. "Dar's a jar of cherry brandy left in de yard by dem locusses. Juss hold on."

The old negress sped away, and soon returned with the jar; and, after the planter had partaken freely of its stimulating contents, he again asked to be aided to his feet.

With the assistance of the ladies he was soon erect, and gazing about him.

The embers of his late happy home glared in his eyes, but he turned his gaze for the first time that night to the spot where was hidden that maddening yellow dross for which so many sell their eternal souls.

In a hollow between the forks of a tree, upon a limb of which he had been so dreadfully tortured, covered with rotting wood and leaves, over which had grown a thick covering of moss and mould, was hidden the canister of gold.

His eyes glistened as they noticed that the green richness of the mould was undisturbed, and a smile of pride and triumph curled his pale lip as he whispered to his wife :

“It is still safe! you cannot tell how I feared for my secret when that trooper climbed right over the spot to arrange his rope for my hanging.”

Mrs. Alexander shuddered as she glanced toward the tree, but made no remark. It was a secret which had nearly, might yet cost her husband his life, and she turned her thoughts from it gladly.

“You were fortunate in hiding, Mrs. M'Donald,” continued the old planter, his voice growing stronger as he spoke—“very fortunate, for that fellow Cashmore meant the basest usage toward you and your daughter.”

So was Mr. Alexander fortunate, in not being left a stiff and staring corpse by those merciless marauders—far more fortunate than scores of others who were literally hanged or tortured to death during that dreadful march under “the order for relentless devastation.”

“It seems we were indeed fortunate,” replied Mrs. M'Donald, as she glanced upon the red and smouldering

ruins around. "We hid in the pine thicket, and were very nearly found by a party of troopers who evidently were searching for us. Heaven knows what agony of mind we suffered as we heard the fierce oaths and horrible language of those men. They seemed to know, or at least to hope, that we were within hearing, for they called us by name, and uttered the vilest threats of what would be our fate, should they catch us. O God! can it be possible that those men were born of woman? Awful! Such base, inhuman, degrading threats! I shudder as I recall them. I shall shudder to my dying day as I remember their dreadful speech."

The noble and refined lady, nurtured in the lap of wealth and esteem, living in an atmosphere of high-bred politeness and scrupulous respect for women, until the abolition crusade swept over the unhappy South, hid her pale face in her trembling hands, as did her no less shocked daughter, as the remembrance of what had passed flashed upon their minds.

Well might they shudder. The sergeant deputed by the infamous Flaskill to seek for them, was one of the vilest of the vile; one of those ribaldry-loving swine in the semblance of humanity, who delight in villanous oaths, atrocious blasphemy, and foul language. While beating about the woods with his scarcely less debased comrades, seeking eagerly for the trembling ladies, who lay cowering beneath a heap of decayed twigs, branches, and pine-straw, the

inhuman wretch had filled the air with oaths and awfully-spoken threats of violence worse than death. Crouching, shuddering, quivering in the very extreme of terror, that delicate mother and that tender daughter were forced to hear every vile word. Sometimes, though trembling even to breathe, lest their hiding-place might be revealed by a sigh, they stopped their ears, to shut out the torrent of atrocious ribaldry and obscenity rolling from the loud tongues of the ferocious troopers as they floundered amid the thicket; then anxious to know if their pursuers were still near, they would listen again, until shocked and mutilated modesty demanded instant stoppage of the sense of hearing.

And what dreadful fate would have been theirs had their infuriated and unscrupulous seekers found them in their covert! Let the fate, sad, melancholy, maddening fate, of many a hapless Southern maid and matron, victims of that cruel war, answer. We dare not. Let the dishevelled hair, the staring eyes, the incoherent speech, the crazed intellects and broken hearts of many an inmate of Southern lunatic asylums, reply. We will not. Let gibbering idiocy, frenzied grief, maddening shame, raging anguish, moaning sorrow grovelling amid the ashes of Southern homes, reply. We cannot.

"May God help us all to bear our trials!" remarked Mr. Alexander. "I see that the enemy has left us nothing, not even a shed for shelter. Poor things," he continued, gazing pityingly upon a group of negresses and their

children, "they say they do all this that you may be free. But I see none of the men, nor any of the larger boys."

"De Yankees done driven and carried off all our husbands, massa, and all de grown-up boys," replied an old crone, who seemed to be the ancestress of all. "Gwine to make sojers of dem, day said."

"Did they go willingly, Clary?"

"Some jus' foolish 'nuff to go anywhar," replied Clary, rocking herself to and fro over a sick negro child. "But dem as wasn't willin' to go, day knocked down wid dere guns, and made 'em go anyhow. 'Fore God, dis chile is mity sick, an' all de beds done burned up. De Lor' help us, massa."

"Amen!" replied Mr. Alexander. "We are indeed in a fearful strait, and need help. You must shift for yourselves, poor creatures. You see how our enemies have left us. Scatter over the country. Those who have houses left will shelter you. Come, wife, and ladies, some of our neighbors may have a house left to welcome us to its shelter for a few days."

But help soon arrived, in the person of a poor but vigilant neighbor, whose humble home had escaped the rush of the invading host. At a distance he had seen the burning home of the Alexanders, and when assured that the enemy had passed on to destroy elsewhere, had hastened with his wagon, drawn by a single broken-down horse, to offer the shelter of his log cabin, which was accepted gratefully.

The helpless negresses and their children remained for hours, staring at the embers and ashes of what had ever been to them a noble, a generous, a patriarchal home; wondering, in their simple intellects, if to make negroes free it was necessary to burn their homes, destroy their food, and ruin the only persons to whom they could look for aid.



CHAPTER XII.

ALWAYS WOUNDED.

It is impossible, in a work of this size, to follow minutely the wanderings, trials, and miseries of the M'Donalds up to the day when they found shelter beneath the roof of a relative in the capital of the Palmetto State, in February, 1865. Their mournful history was very similar to that of thousands who were driven from their blazing homes by Federal torches.

The hosts of Sherman had swept on to the sea. The Grand March had been made, crushing the feeble though pertinacious resistance of the few thousands of "ragged rebels" who opposed its ever-moving avalanche of "relentless devastation."

"Thirty miles on either side of a line drawn from Atlanta to Savannah," have been devastated. How fear-

fully, terribly devastated may be imagined by reading page 37 of General Sherman's official report, from which we have repeatedly quoted.

The corn, fodder, wheat, grain, sweet-potatoes, cattle, hogs, sheep, poultry—all that could be used to sustain human life, was "*consumed*" by the immense host, marching under the flag of the Union to the dread music of that "order for relentless devastation," all along that vast track over which the red and flaming wrath of the conqueror tramped.

The ravages, the ruin, the woe of that celebrated march over the ashes of Southern homes, will compare with, if not exceed, the wreck made in India by Warren Hastings. Court-houses, churches, academies, public and private edifices mark still, with piles of ashes, the path of the destroyer; but it is in the hearts of the plundered and ruined that we are to find the more terrible records of that time.

The savage treatment to which Mr. Alexander had been subjected, resulted in his death within a few weeks after the destruction of his home. A frame so aged and feeble could not long support the shock of the hangman's rope. He died a patriot, praying for the welfare of his country; he died a Christian, forgiving his enemies; he died a martyr, with the scar of the rope upon his neck.

And thus perished many other aged citizens of Georgia and of South Carolina. And many are slowly but surely and painfully perishing, as we pen this true record—their

timeworn frames crushed to premature graves by the tortures of the rope, the fist, and the lash, which they suffered at the hands of men in blue, commonly called "bummers."

Mrs. Alexander did not survive her aged husband longer than to see his body hidden beneath the clay.

The gold confided to the faithful care of the old planter, we may as well state here, in 1865, was secured by his widowed daughter, and was her only support, for her husband died in a Northern prison, frozen to death.

Let us return to the M'Donalds. The name of the relative in Columbia, whose generous roof gladly gave the wanderers shelter, was Huger, a branch of that noble family so famous in the annals of South Carolina.

The males of the family were in the army of General Johnston, and only Mrs. Huger and her two daughters remained in the city, at the time the M'Donalds became their guests.

In this noble family, as in all others of the South, the ravages of war were plainly visible. They all wore that black garb of mourning so common then—so common yet; and the family had become greatly impoverished. Yet the almost royal hospitality of the South Carolinian shone as brilliantly as ever. If steeped to the lips in the universal poverty of all Southern patriots, they were willing to share their last crust of bread.

"We have a wounded Confederate officer in our house," remarked Mrs. Huger, the day after the arrival of the

M'Donalds. "He is able to be up, however, and you will see him this morning at breakfast. Our house has been quite a hospital for several weeks; but we have only one sufferer left, and he would not remain any longer, did we not insist upon his regaining his strength."

Both Mrs. M'Donald and her daughter had seen so many wounded Confederates, and nursed so many in hospitals in towns, and by the wayside, that neither felt much curiosity upon the subject, and made no further inquiry.

They were seated at the breakfast-table, when they heard hesitating steps, aided by a crutch, approaching the door of the apartment.

"It is my patient," said Mrs. Huger, rising to open the door.

The officer entered, evidently weak and in pain, but as soon as his eyes met those of the M'Donalds the latter exclaimed—

"Frank Bartow!"

"What is left of him," replied the young officer with a smile of sadness, as he extended a hand to the mother and daughter. "I have had my old luck—been wounded again."

But Myrtis M'Donald, regardless of those present, after regarding his thin visage and emaciated form for a moment, burst into tears, and threw herself into his arms.

"Oh, Frank! dear Frank, when will this dreadful war end? Poor fellow! this is the seventh time you have been wounded."

"My luck, Myrtis," replied Frank, as he took his place at the table. "Indeed, I was fortunate in Georgia after I parted with you. I joined a company of Confederate officers and soldiers, all, or nearly all, convalescing from wounds or sickness, and I flatter myself that we inflicted some hard blows upon that host which devastated Georgia on its way to the sea. We fought them wherever we could, and many a band of 'bummers' and horde of plunderers—that is, the survivors—have good cause to remember the command of Captain Brantley. I was fortunate in escaping injury."

"But when were you wounded?" asked Myrtis, regarding her scarred lover with admiring eyes.

"I was shot below the knee, a few weeks ago, while engaged in a reconnoissance—you must know that I had succeeded in gaining a position upon the staff of that noble son of Georgia, General William J. Hardee." He hastened to a window and looked out. "But there go a party of officers, and one of them is our kinsman, General Wade Hampton—see, he is looking this way—he is coming toward the house."

General Hampton, for it was that famous leader, halted immediately beneath the window, and, on seeing the ladies, he bared his head and bowed, saying:

"Ah, you are there, my cousins! I heard this morning that you had sought refuge in Columbia, and I heard, too, that you, Captain Bartow, were badly wounded. Can you sit in the saddle?"

"Only to fall out of it, general," replied Captain Bartow, in a mournful tone.

"I will have a litter, or an ambulance here for you, captain," remarked the general. "Our military council has decided to leave Columbia to her fate," he added, in a bitter tone, for he had opposed the abandonment of the capital. "What her fate will be I can well imagine. She will be plundered and burned."

"General," replied Captain Bartow, after pausing a moment, during which his eyes had met those of Myrtis M'Donald, "I do not wish to add to the incumbrance of a flying army. I will remain."

"As you please, my dear fellow, but persuade those ladies to retreat from the city while there is time," said General Hampton. "Columbia, as the capital of South Carolina, will be destroyed."

Then, bidding them adieu, he bowed and rejoined the party of general officers.

"And that small, dark-faced man is the gallant Beauregard," said Myrtis, gazing after the party.

"Yes, that is Beauregard, the idol of Louisiana," replied Captain Bartow, in tones of admiration. "The hero of Shiloh, and the preserver of Charleston, until it became useless to the Confederacy. But you have heard all that General Hampton said. The city is being abandoned by our troops—"

"And how foolish in Frank Bartow, a Confederate

officer, to remain in it to be captured!" interrupted Mrs. M'Donald.

"And in my dear Mrs. M'Donald also," retorted the officer. "No doubt her old acquaintance, Mr. Seth Cashmore, is still with Sherman's army, and desires to pay his respects to the M'Donalds, eh?"

"Dat's so," put in old Myra. "I tole missus dat dar was no use in comin' to Columby to git away from dem blue locusses—day bound to go eberywhere, an' de nex' place sure to come to Columby, an' sartin to burn de town. Bress de Lor'!" cried the old negress, clapping her hands, "I done hid dat portrait of ole massa when we was in 'Gusty, Georgia. It's tored an' faced mightily, but 'tain't spiled—"

"Hush, Myra! Go eat your breakfast," said her mistress, who was plunged into anxious thought.

"Got no appletite for breakfus when I knows dem blue locusses comin' to Columby," muttered old Myra, shaking her head. "Mr. Cashmore sure to be wid 'em, after spoons and all sich. He jest sich truck as Butler de beast."

"The Federals will be here to-morrow," remarked Captain Bartow. "Decide, ladies. General Hampton was right. The city will be destroyed."

Tears were streaming from the eyes of Mrs. M'Donald as the officer spoke. Poor lady! she was thinking of her trials, her sufferings, losses, and wanderings. Much and incessant calamity had begun to tell even upon her heroic and enduring spirit.

“ O my God ! ” she mused, “ will my wanderings, my flights never cease until I lay my weary head in the grave ? Am I ever to be a fugitive in the land of my fathers ? I fled from the sea to Rome, from Rome to Canton, from Canton to Marietta, from Marietta to Atlanta, from Atlanta to Newton, from Newton to Augusta, from Augusta to Charleston, from Charleston to Columbia—whither shall I now flee ? ”

The fate which this unfortunate lady deplored had been the fate of thousands of noble Southern matrons ; pursued from refuge to refuge ; the torch and the bayonet, the sword and the shell, the threat and the deed of an ever-advancing foe, keen and destructive upon their paths. Should the eye of a Northern matron, secure in the protection and opulence of her powerful section, ever read these pages, let her extend her sympathy to her impoverished, homeless, broken-hearted sisters of the South.

CHAPTER XIII.

CASHMORE ON THE TRACK.

BUT when Myrtis M'Donald passed her loving arms around her mother's neck, and pressed her soft lips to hers, the unhappy widow dried her tears, and the old look of defiant resolution returned to her eyes.

"I will retreat no farther, unless driven by the bayonet," she said.

"But Cashmore—" urged her daughter, who, since that fearful night in Newton County, had ever shuddered in recalling the image of that villain.

"It is hardly probable that he is still with Sherman's army," replied Mrs. M'Donald.

"Even the possibility of ever again being in the power of that wretch is horrible," said Myrtis. "Mother, I dare not remain."

"Nor shall you remain with my consent, my child," replied her mother.

"And leave you, mother?"

"My dear child," answered Mrs. M'Donald, "I am unable to undergo the fatigues of another retreat—and why retreat? It is ever my fortune to be overtaken. But, perhaps, if we separate, you may be more fortunate. I know that Captain Bartow refused the kind offer of General Hampton for some other purpose than merely to be captured by his hated enemies."

"True, madam," said Captain Bartow. "I would have felt small in spirit while riding in the general's ambulance, and reflecting that my betrothed and her mother were left to the mercy of such villains as Cashmore and Flaskill."

"Ah, you have not yet heard how they treated poor Mr. Alexander!" exclaimed Myrtis.

"I will hear all in good time," replied Captain Bar-

tow; "but meanwhile I must limp out to seek for some means by which I may rescue you from that vampire Cashmore. I am very sure that the bloodhound is with Sherman's army, and has learned where you are—at least that you are in Columbia."

He had barely strength to move about upon his wounded limb, and its broken bones had not sufficiently knitted together to allow him to use haste. Yet in his eagerness to seek some means of retreat for his friends, he tripped at the head of the stairs, fell heavily, and not only broke his shattered limb again, but fainted from the agony of his hurt.

He lay so pale, so white, so still, so ghastly at the foot of the stairs that old Myra, who was in the hall below when he fell, cried out :

"He's killed ! Poor Massa Frank done clean dead ! Dat cloud ob smoke dat swallowed him up in Atlanta done prove true."

The ladies, who had attempted in vain to arrest his fall, hastened to his assistance.

"He is not dead, he has swooned !" said Mrs. M'Donald.

"Oh, mother ! remember his broken limb !" cried Myrtis, as she swept the dark curls from the pale brow.

Mrs. Huger called to her servants to aid her in placing the unfortunate officer upon a sofa in the hall, while Myra hurried to procure a surgeon. She was successful in meet-

ing one upon the street, one she recognized as an old Atlanta acquaintance, and he hastened to aid the wounded man as soon as he learned that it was his friend, Captain Frank Bartow.

The young officer was soon restored to consciousness, and the broken limb reset under the practised hands of the surgeon. He opened his eyes rather wildly at first, but soon recognized his situation.

"Ah, Doctor Dannelly, I have had an unlucky fall, especially at this time. I was about to go out to find means to convey these ladies from the city—"

"You would have failed, my dear fellow," replied Doctor Dannelly, "unless you carried your weight in gold with you."

"And can nothing be done—"

"It is out of the question now, Frank," whispered Myrtis. "You cannot be moved in your present condition, and I will never leave you unattended."

"But Mrs. Huger, and your mother—"

"No matter, Frank," was the resolute reply. "My place is by your side, and unless you drive me away, I will remain in Columbia. Suppose they were to fire Columbia! who would be so watchful over your safety as I?"

Captain Bartow smiled, despite his pain, at the earnestness of the young lady, but urged both her and her mother to depart immediately. The ladies were firm in their purpose, Myrtis saying:

"It may be probable that Seth Cashmore is with the Federal army, but it is still more probable that Major Irving is also there, and I know he will protect us from that wretch."

"His protection did not help us in Newton County," replied Mrs. M'Donald, bitterly. "But I do not blame gallant Major Irving for that ; his purpose was noble, and he did what he could."

"I must leave you, my friends," remarked Dr. Dannelly, "as my duties demand my presence elsewhere;" and after giving some medical advice regarding the wounded officer, he bowed and departed.

The servants of Mrs. Huger, who remained faithful to her, moved the sofa with the officer to a room near the hall, where, but for the solicitous attention of the ladies, he would probably have suffered much in reflecting upon his fortunes.

"I advise you, Mrs. M'Donald, and you, Myrtis, not to show yourselves at the doors or windows, or you may be seen by Cashmore, or some of his friends. Old Myra, too, must remain indoors," said Captain Bartow, during the day ; and this advice was decided to be very prudent.

The day wore away, the city was abandoned by the Confederate forces, and the events and scenes reminded Mrs. M'Donald greatly of the evacuation, under similar circumstances, of Atlanta. At night she ascended to the top of the house, upon which was a small observatory, from

which the whole city and much of the surrounding country could be seen.

There seemed to be, and doubtless was, a cloud of universal gloom upon the fated capital. All knew that a hostile and victorious army was massed upon the banks of the Broad, the Saluda, and the Congaree rivers; and the history of the sufferings of Georgia, and that portion of South Carolina lying between Charleston and Columbia, was well known in the city. The ominous booming of the enemy's cannon had been heard all day, and many shells had been thrown into the city, especially in the vicinity of the railroad depot, "*to scatter the PEOPLE,*" says page 45 of General Sherman's official report, "*who were seen carrying away sacks of corn and meal that we needed!*"

It is to be supposed that "the people" here mentioned were famishing women and children, as well as a few starving plunderers; but the right or the might of war ever ignores and tramples upon the rights and necessities of the people, especially when the people are "rebels," and, therefore, by the edict of the merciless radicals, "without any right, save the right to live, and that only at the option of the victors!"

Mrs. M'Donald felt her widowed and saddened heart grow still more sorrowful, as she listened to the various subdued sounds of terror hovering over the city, and as she noticed the reddened sky in the direction of the hostile army. That lurid light, she well knew, spoke of the

destruction of conquered Southern homes, and her experienced mind could easily depict the sharp miseries of those unfortunate South Carolinians who were suffering the same dread horrors which had heaped the soil of Georgia with ashes, and driven thousands of her helpless citizens homeless and penniless from "thoroughly stripped plantations."

We will not pause to attempt to describe the feelings of the unfortunate lady, whose high and pure devotion to her helpless country caused her to feel as keenly the calamities of the South as she did her own.

"May Heaven have mercy upon this city!" she murmured, as she left the observatory. "She is delivered into the hands of the spoiler, and he will be pitiless."

On the following morning the mayor of Columbia went out to meet the Federal advance, and formally surrendered the beautiful capital of South Carolina, and soon after the hostile columns began to pour into the conquered city. It was a clear and brilliant day, though a strong wind was blowing with all the fury of a tempest. It is not our place here to discuss by whose orders the capital was fired; that question is still fiercely disputed; we know that it was devoted to the flames, whether by accident, or by the orders of the conqueror. The burning of Columbia is but an accompaniment of our story, and we leave its origin to the decision of those better informed. We have it, however, from the pen of the commander-in-chief of the invading

army, that after the fire had begun, "imprisoned Federal officers, rescued by the army, *may* have assisted in spreading the flames, and *may* have indulged in *unconcealed* joy to see the ruin of the capital of *South Carolina!*"

Mr. Seth Cashmore, who was among the first to enter the city, did not hesitate to gratify his plundering and destructive propensities. His former friend and accomplice in villany, the valiant Captain Tom Flaskill, was no longer with him; for that great "bummer" had been called to strict account by Major Irving's insulted lieutenant, Giles; and went suddenly to his final account with a bullet in his brain, placed there by the hand of the lieutenant when they met in Savannah.

Mr. Seth Cashmore was quite pleased to be rid of his ferocious comrade, whose grasping hand and insatiate avarice had plucked many a glittering rebel prize from the cowardly speculator. But the latter, urged by an avenging fate, instead of quietly withdrawing from the army, and hastening to the North, to cheat his fellows by the laws of trade, remained with the Federal host, and accompanied it to Columbia. He had heard, as had many others, that the rich citizens of Charleston, and of the State in general, had sent all their gold and silver plate, jewels, and other valuables of small bulk, to Columbia, as a place of perfect security. He had heard that all this wealth was hidden and buried in that city, and he saw himself digging it up, hunting it out, filling great trunks with rich gold and silver

plate, and cramming his deep pockets with diamonds and precious stones—the property of those lordly families whose very names he hated.

Therefore, Mr. Seth Cashmore was among the first to honor the prostrate State capital with his agreeable presence. There were many fires during the day, in various parts of the city, and Cashmore had pretty good luck in adding to his accumulations, as he assisted in plundering a few churches, and several private houses. But it was nearly night when the flames which “may have been aided” by those “rescued officers,” began to spread in every direction, and then the speculator was quite at home.

He had a strong suspicion that the M'Donalds were in the city, and he would have been hugely delighted to know the exact spot where he might find them. He trusted to his great luck, as he termed his career of successful villany, to aid him in burning them out before morning.

The flames, aided by the strong wind, and by hundreds of incendiary hands, had taken fatal hold upon the vitals of the city long before midnight, and “became totally unmanageable,” says the official report.

In the mean time, old Myra, whose curiosity and terror were too great to suffer her to remain within doors, had ventured upon the street; and being attracted by the glare of burning houses, bewildered by terrified families, and forgetful of every thing except the terrible scenes around her, had wandered far away from the residence of Mrs. Huger,

which was, as yet, unmenaced by the flames, until she suddenly encountered Major (now Colonel) Irving.

That high-minded officer was at the head of his regiment, using all his power of intellect, energy, and position, to subdue the fury of the conflagration, and to rescue helpless women and children. Those who witnessed the horrors of that dreadful night, when so many hundreds of Southern homes became ashes at one fell swoop, relate heart-sickening details of the cruelty and ferocity of many of the invaders. They tell of terrified ladies, from whose delicate hands were torn such articles of clothing or furniture as they had saved from the flames, and that men in blue cast into the fire, even the garments of children, and the bedding of houseless families; and universal report, from thousands who witnessed and suffered that night, and the two days following, declares that the Federal troops in many, many instances, acted with a fury and malice almost demoniacal.

Colonel Irving was not one of these white savages, but a true specimen of the noble-hearted American citizen, when the soul has not become shrivelled and warped by sectional hate and political malignity. He, and men like him, made no war upon women and unoffending citizens. He held a position of power, and he as well as others in the Federal army used that power to protect the defenceless. Had not spirits like his existed in that great and triumphant army, it is very probable, nay, it is a certainty, that

not a single house in the capital of South Carolina would have been spared.

Mounted upon a powerful horse, he rode from place to place as his presence was demanded, and it was while pausing for a moment to give hasty orders, that old Myra recognized him, and shouted his name aloud.

He turned quickly, and a kind smile of recognition lighted up his handsome face, as he was about to address her, when his glance fell upon Seth Cashmore, peering closely into old Myra's agitated visage.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAST OF CASHMORE.

THE eager speculator, delighted to stumble upon the old negress, grasped her fiercely by the throat, resolved to choke speedy information from her.

"Ha! old black devil!" he cried. "Have I caught you again? Eh! curse you, if you do not lead me—"

He had proceeded thus far when a sabre gleamed over his head, and fell sharply against his cheek, shearing off an ear close to his skull. He roared with rage and pain, freed the negress, and looking up, recognized the indignant face and burning eyes of Colonel Irving.

“Scoundrel!” cried the colonel, again raising his sword, “fellows like you are unfit to live.”

Mr. Cashmore held firmly to the opposite opinion, and proved it by darting into the crowd, in which he was soon swallowed up; yet, though both the negress and the Federal lost sight of him, he was exceedingly careful to keep them in view.

Colonel Irving learned with keen regret that the McDonalds were in Columbia, and ordered Myra to hasten to conduct him to them. This was now out of her power, for, bewildered by the roar and glare around her, as well as confused by the late attack of Cashmore, she could only gape and whirl, unable to act as a guide.

“At whose house are the ladies?” demanded the colonel.

“Missus Huger’s, massa officer! Missus William Huger’s—de Lor’ hab marcy on all creation!” screamed Myra, as a great spark of fire fell upon her neck. “All dis done come of freein’ de black fokes!”

“Mrs. William Huger’s? I know where that is,” replied Colonel Irving, galloping away. But he slackened his speed as he looked back and saw the negress running after him.

“Push on, massa, push on!” cried she. “Nebber mind dis chile. Make haste, massa, for de whole city agwine to be burned down, and Massa Frank, he dar wid all his legs and arms broke! Push on—I knows de way now, sah.”

Yielding to the importunity of Myra, the officer spurred on, and in a few minutes dismounted before the house of Mrs. Huger. The flames had not reached that quarter of the city, nor was there any probability that they would, unless incendiary hands should ply the torch.

"I fear the whole city will be laid in ashes," mused the Federal, as he paused for a moment upon the front steps of the house, and listened to the distant roar of shouting thousands. "If Columbia be destroyed, eternal infamy will rest upon our arms. An evacuated, surrendered, defenceless city laid in ashes by American soldiers! This will indeed be a disgrace and a reproach."

Turning quickly, for it was no time for reflection, he entered the house, and perceiving a light shining from an open door, hastened toward it.

Frank Bartow, near whom were gathered all the ladies of the house, heard the firm and martial tread as it approached. The wounded Confederate's pale check grew a shade paler; not with fear, for he had too often faced death to blanch at its coming, but with dread for the fate of those helpless females, whose only protector was now a prostrate and shattered man. His grasp grew fierce upon the butt of his repeater, and raising himself on his elbow he fixed his steady gaze upon the open door. He could die but once, and he had resolved to sell his life dearly. His experience in that ensanguined war had taught him that "wounded rebels" were sometimes bayoneted to death.

Colonel Irving entered speedily, and as he did so the levelled repeater of the Confederate confronted him, covering with its steady, unerring aim the centre of his forehead.

"Halt!" cried Bartow, the instant he recognized the Federal uniform. "You have come far enough."

The young colonel halted, yet his eye and features remained calm, while a haughty smile, partly of anger, partly of defiance curled his lip. He had not time to speak when Mrs. M'Donald rushed before the levelled pistol, exclaiming:

"Frank! It is Major Irving, our defender!"

Bartow instantly lowered his weapon, and a deep flush of shame for a moment darkened his brow and cheek, but in a moment he said, in a hearty tone:

"Colonel Irving must be sure that I can intend no attack upon one whose generosity has protected many unfortunates of my country. Colonel, Captain Frank Bartow is happy to be your prisoner, since prisoner he must be."

The Federal colonel, whose heart was as noble as his courage was high, detected a latent bitterness even in the hearty tone used by the Confederate captain, and replied:

"I did not come here, captain, to make prisoners, but to save life, and to protect private property. I have just learned that my esteemed friends, these ladies, were here, and I come to assure them of my protection and aid, so far as either lies in my power."

"We expected no less of Colonel Irving," said Miss M'Donald, warmly, as she gave her hand to the officer.

An animated exchange of compliments and opinions followed, and was quickly ended by a remark of the colonel, who said :

“Keep your weapon, Captain Bartow—at least until my return, as you may need it. A bitter enemy of yours and of these ladies is in the city—”

“Ah! the wretch Seth Cashmore!” exclaimed Myrtis, shuddering as she remembered the brutal vindictiveness of the speculator.

“Yes, Miss M'Donald,” continued Colonel Irving, “I am sorry to say that Cashmore is in the city, and I need not warn you that there are many spirits like his at his command—”

“The fierce Flaskill?” asked Myrtis.

“Oh, he is dead, but I fear there are many like him, boon and sworn companions of this fellow Cashmore, so I will hurry to lead or send a detachment from my regiment to keep guard around this block of buildings, and to see that you are not molested. To-morrow we may be able to do more.”

The generous-hearted Northerner did not remain to receive the shower of thanks which was his due, but hurried away to the street and sprang into his saddle.

“I must make haste,” he thought, as he observed the increased glare and nearness of the flames. “Many new fires have broken out since I left the street. Good Heaven! can this deed be by the command of General Sherman!”

With this question stinging his mind, Colonel Irving spurred his horse toward that quarter of the city where he expected to find his regiment.

That question has stung many minds since the deed was done. Now that the war is over, the world is aghast with horror and rebuke as it contemplates the havoc made by Sherman's army as it swept through defenceless Georgia and South Carolina; and the burning of Columbia seems but in dramatic keeping with the terrible tragedy in which he who was the "star" of the infernal performance declared—"I would blush for shame if I had ever insulted or struck a fallen foe!"

How far his fame may prove his veracity, posterity will decide. The smoke still rises from the ashes of the South, and the time has not come when all the world shall know "who burned Columbia."

No sooner had the sounds of Colonel Irving's rapid departure died away from the vicinity of Mrs. Huger's mansion, than the ill-omened visage of Seth Cashmore showed itself from the shadow on the opposite side of the street. He had followed Myra as she hurried homeward, and, having dogged her to the house, fell back into concealment as he recognized Colonel Irving's horse.

He waited patiently until he saw that officer depart. He crossed the street with rapid strides, his eyes sparkling with anticipated revenge and gratified malice, and his ugly face distorted with rage, pain, and devilish triumph. His

ear, or where the ear had been, smarted keenly, but not more than his vindictive soul as he remembered the rejection and scorn of his suit. Chance, long hoped for, had at length placed those detested M'Donalds within his reach, and Seth Cashmore was not a man to feel the slightest scruple in using his power even to the completion of the basest purposes.

"They are in this house, no doubt," he thought, as he paused at the door. "Irving has been here to promise them his protection, and he will soon return with a guard. But it will take all of half an hour to bring his men up, and in that half an hour—well, Seth Cashmore can do a great deal to humble the haughty Myrtis M'Donald in that time. As for her mother—well, I think I could shoot that insulting old woman as readily as look at her."

Seth Cashmore set his teeth hard, and his heart throbbed with savage exultation as he turned the knob and strode in.

He had not taken three steps into the hall when Mrs. M'Donald advanced toward him, bearing a candle. The rays were reflected by his glittering buttons, and for an instant she thought he was Colonel Irving.

"Back so soon, Colonel Irving—" she began, but checking her speech as she recognized the brutish features and protruding eyes of the half-drunken speculator.

"Your servant, madam," cried Cashmore, with a hoarse laugh of derision, and drawing his sword to terrify the undaunted lady. "You know me now !"

"You are Seth Cashmore," replied the widow, in a loud and clear tone, meant to warn Captain Bartow—"you are Seth Cashmore, and you are treading upon dangerous ground. I warn you in time. Go, the door is behind you."

"Oh yes, old lady," roared Cashmore, feeding his courage with a tremendous oath, the foulest, most blasphemous he could muster, "you ordered me out of your house in Atlanta, and I went, but I'm lord and master here. Where is your dainty daughter, eh? She and I must have a word together. Out of my way, or I'll cut you down!"

He raised and flourished his sword as he spoke, and Mrs. McDonald saw murder flashing in his fierce eyes. She grew very pale, perhaps less with fear than for what she knew would come, and said, still in that loud, clear tone:

"You insist upon seeing my daughter? You will have no mercy—no pity, Seth Cashmore?"

"Mercy? Pity? I will teach you what mercy I give. Out of my way, old fool!"

"Go on," she said, moving aside, and pointing toward the room occupied by Captain Bartow. "You will find my daughter in that room."

He thought, simpleton, that his threats and ferocious looks had appalled her, and, striding by, hurried to force his hateful presence upon his intended victim. He had reached the open door, had faced inward to enter, when the

sharp crack of Bartow's repeater, and a deep, painful slash across his cheek told him there were still "rebel bullets" ready to defend "rebel maidens."

The pistol cracked again, and Cashmore's right arm fell shattered to his side. He stayed no longer to be a target for such salutes, especially as he recognized the flaming eyes of Frank Bartow gleaming through the smoke, but, yelling with pain and terror, wheeled and rushed from the house.

Safe in the street his desire for instant revenge returned. A drunken soldier, perhaps one of "the rescued officers," was staggering along, torch in hand and bellowing, "Rally 'round the flag, boys!" as he swung the blazing pine above his head. Seth Cashmore snatched the torch with his left hand, for his right arm was broken, and shouting to other stragglers whose flambeaux told of their deeds, began to fire the square, rushing from house to house, and sparing none.

In this he had no lack of imitators, and the whole square of buildings, with the exception of that of Mrs. Huger, was soon in flames. That, too, would have been fired, but for the sudden arrival of five men of Irving's regiment, who repulsed all who attempted to enter the house.

Cashmore, drunken with rage, pain, and brandy, did not forget to plunder as he plied his torch, and finding it very difficult to rob and snatch with a blazing brand in his hand, soon cast it aside, leaving the burning to be done by

others. In pillaging a house already in flames, his greedy nature led him to the highest story, where he consumed some time in breaking open a trunk which he believed contained gold, plate, or jewelry.

He was disappointed, and cursing the poverty or cunning of "the rebels," turned to retrace his steps to the street, as the room had already become filled with smoke. When he reached the head of the stairs he found them wrapped in angry flames—red, crackling, fiercely-moving flames—which seemed to leap with triumph at his entrapping.

To descend was impossible. He leaned over the hall balustrade and gazed downward. Nothing met his straining sight except rushing, roaring, mounting fire, from whose red tongues rolled upward a suffocating smoke, hot and stifling as the breath of devils.

He must go up. There was a small step-ladder, leading to a trap-door which opened upon the roof, and he sprang to that with the activity of wildest terror. He reached the roof, and filled his parched lungs with deep draughts of the night wind. He thought he was safe, with nothing before him but the simple feat of clambering from that roof to the next, the one on his left, for that on his right was already in flames.

It was no easy matter to climb along that sharp rooftop with a broken arm, and faint from loss of blood. But he could do it, must do it, and reach the caves of the

adjoining house. There was no time for delay, for already the flames from which he had fled, were darting angrily through the sky-light, as if looking for him, hunting him down, hungry to devour him.

He moved on, slowly and painfully, his shattered arm swinging in torture at his side. He raved and cursed ; he shouted for help ; shouted an incoherent prayer ; then blasphemed ; hoped, despaired, died a thousand deaths in struggling to save one miserable, pernicious life. But still he moved on, the roof growing hot beneath his wide-stretched limbs and unwieldy body, while puffs of smoke began to shoot from among the warping shingles. He writhed on, half choked by the dense masses of smoke now and then borne down upon him by the wind. From his lofty perch he had a rare view of the burning capital. As far as his eye could reach, north, east, south, and west, on every side, rose the red and glaring ministers of Federal vengeance. He could hear the shouts of those who vainly tried to check the advance of those fire-warriors of Shermanic conquest ; the cheers of those who fed the flames ; the yells of a wild, half-mad, infuriated soldiery, waging sharp war under the dread banner of "relentless devastation !" He heard the shrill screams of terrified women, the sharper shrieks of homeless children, none the less shrill, sharp, and heart-rending because they rose from the lips of "rebels ;" for God gave even "rebels" hearts to bleed and souls to despair—a fact of which no note was

taken in that order for "relentless devastation!"—a fact ignored by Stevens, Butler, and other gentle-hearted beings whom courtesy calls human.

Seth Cashmore had a rare view of blazing Columbia, and no doubt, under other circumstances he might have rubbed his greasy palms, rolled his exultant eyes, and licked his lips with all the infernal gusto of a Lloyd Garrison, revelling in a dream of universal negro insurrection and abolition destruction. But as it was, he saw nothing to admire, except the decreasing distance between himself and the next roof.

He had almost reached it, had shouted with joy, as he extended his unwounded arm to clutch the eaves, when, as if by magic, all that roof sank down—sank so suddenly, that his hand remained outstretched, grasping at the empty air—sank down with a great puff, almost a roar, and then a volcano seemed to rush straight up from where it had been.

"Better be dashed to pieces than be burned to death!" groaned the miserable wretch, as he recoiled from the dreadful heat which swept upward like a sirocco from the hottest pit of the infernal.

So sudden, so intense had been that breath of fire, that his hair and beard were crisped to his blistered scalp and skin, and unable to endure the horrible torture, he toppled over sidewise, hoping to roll from the roof and be dashed to instant death upon the pavement far below.

But fate, as if resolved to give the wretch a foretaste of the doom he so richly merited, thrust a spike in his garments as he rolled from the eaves, and thus suspended him in mid-air.

He was seen by those below, writhing and twisting like a worm on a hook. A mass of smoke shut him from view, the walls of the blazing house fell suddenly inward, and that was the last ever known of Mr. Seth Cashmore.

His bones and flesh went to swell that great heap of the ashes of Southern homes which he had been a very demon in aiding to make, and doubtless his soul fled to its appointed place.



CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

WE hardly need state that the vigorous exertions of Colonel Irving rescued all within the house of Mrs. Huger from the flames.

The destruction of Columbia was soon followed by the surrender of the veteran armies of Lee and Johnston. The short-lived and meteoric star of the Southern Cross sank as suddenly as it had risen, and the so-called peace having been declared, the M'Donalds returned to devastated, smouldering Georgia.

The war had left them, here and there, in that unfortunate State, a few acres of barren land, marked with heaps of ashes of what had once been happy Southern homes. The widow sold these sad acres, poor relics of her once great wealth, as Captain Frank Bartow, now the husband of the gentle Myrtis, sold his scanty fields; and with their joint means they have erected a new Southern home, which we fervently pray may never be made ashes by the flames of civil or foreign war.

Old Myra, faithful follower of her mistress, has an humble home of her own upon the land of Frank Bartow, and though in the parlor of the statelier mansion of her young mistress there hangs a splendid painting of Colonel Harde-man M'Donald, you will find above the lowly mantel of firm-hearted Myra that devotedly preserved portrait which survived the hate and malice of brutal Flaskill and brutish Cashmore.

Of this she will say, as she tosses aloft a smiling "rebel babe" who rejoices in the name of Frank Bartow, Jr.:

"Dat's my ole massa's pickter—de Lor' bress his soul! I sed as how ole Myra was agwine to presarbe de ole man's image, an' I 'low she done did it. Ki! dis chile hyar, de borned image of his grandfadder, and Myra's his niggarr till she done died. What I keer for Mistur Linkum's proclamation. I'se a niggarr!"

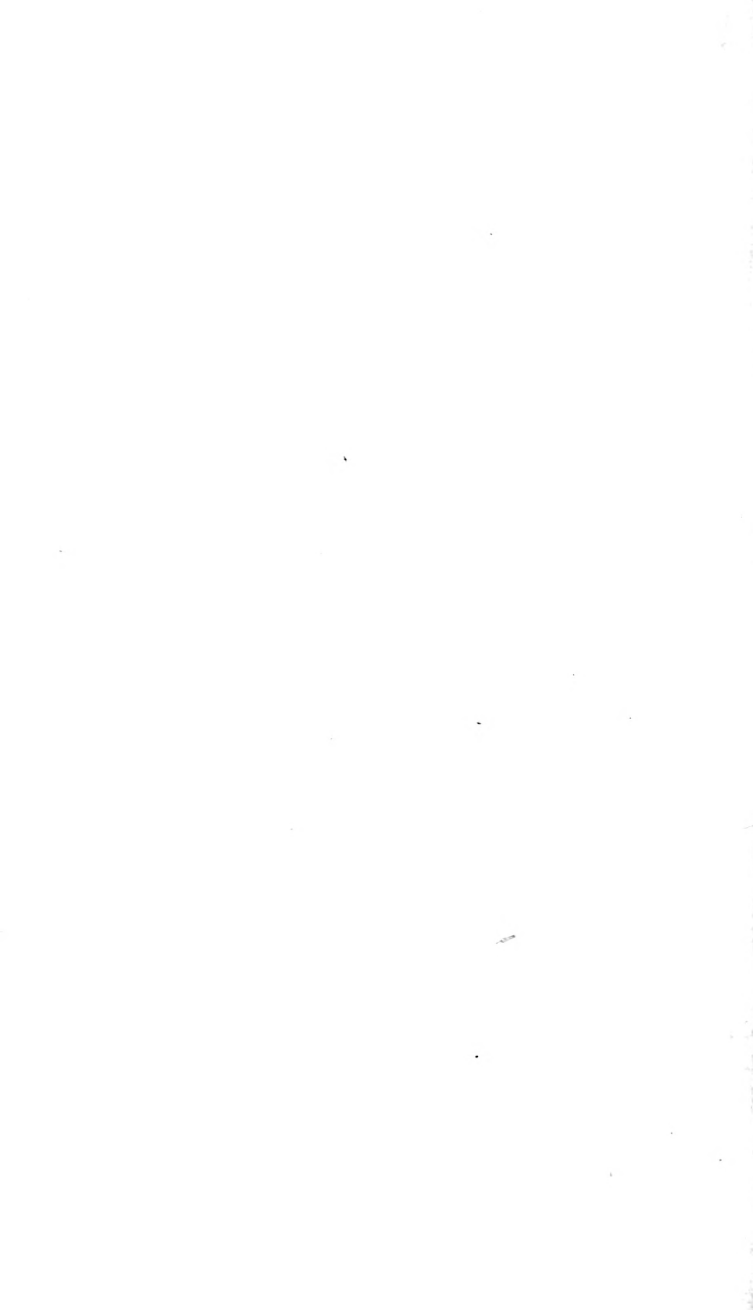
One word to dismiss the lofty-minded and generous-

hearted Northerner, Colonel Irving. Soon after the cessation of hostilities in the field—for those in the forum unhappily continue—he was united to that fair-haired, blue-eyed lady of the North, of whom we have hinted; he resigned his commission, and, true to his patriotic love for the whole Union as it was intended by Washington, Hancock, and Jefferson, is laboring to restore real peace and permanent prosperity to the once firmly established United States.

Yet years of prosperity and peace must again have blessed the now mutilated bosom of the South, ere from those sad relics, the ashes of Southern homes, greatness and happiness can spring to efface the remembrance of “Sherman’s grand march.”

THE END.





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